

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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LECTURES FOR BOYS.

J. F. Flanagan



BY

THE VERY REV.

FRANCIS CUTHBERT DOYLE, O.S.B.

“Sinite parvulos venire ad Me.”

VOL II.

R. & T. WASHBOURNE,
18 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON,
BENZIGER BROS., NEW YORK, CINCINNATI AND CHICAGO.

1900.

NOV - 6 1952

Permissu Superiorum.

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LECTURES FOR BOYS.

THE OPENING OF STUDIES.

As during the Norwegian summer months the sun sinks for a few moments below the horizon, and then mounts again to run his wonted course, so this day at one and the same time brings to a close the bright holiday season, and inaugurates a new year of scholastic work. The prospect of work is not a golden one to a schoolboy's eyes ; but we should imagine that among you there are few that are not old enough and sensible enough to know that it constitutes the main staple of our lives. Play or pleasure is but a rest given to us, that we may return with greater zest to our appointed task. Therefore, manfully turn away your thoughts from the fairy scenes which memory will recall to your minds ; draw a curtain over the pictures of your happy homes with their circles of loving and beloved ones ; crush down all fond regrets that will not fail to arise, and bravely set about the accomplishment of the task which God imposes upon you.

That task, as you know so well, is the work of your education, a work that is twofold in its character, dealing both with your moral and with your intellectual nature, or, as we are accustomed to say, affecting both your head and your heart. Of your physical education, of the development of your bodily frame, we need say nothing, for boys, as a rule, require no encouragement in that respect.

When, then, we speak of educating your heart, or of the work that must occupy you in training it to be that which your parents, your masters, and God Himself wish it to be, we mean the all-important duty of resisting its evil inclinations, for, the moral nature of man, signified by the word "heart,"

is like a garden that has been neglected, or a precious gem that has not yet been polished, or a raw recruit that has not yet been taught his drill. The garden is full of weeds, the gem is encrusted with foreign matter which dims its lustre, and the recruit is clumsy, awkward and ignorant.

Look at the conduct of a boy before his moral nature has been cultivated, or before he has set to work to rid it of the noisome weeds with which it is choked. He tells a lie whenever it suits his interest or his convenience not to speak the truth. If he is in any way thwarted by his companions, he gives a loose rein to his impetuous temper. He takes delight in causing pain and misery to others. He sets at naught the orders of his masters whenever he can do so without incurring punishment. He is idle, and, alas! very often he has no care to check the evil thoughts, and to abstain from the still more evil deeds which the wicked spirit and his own corrupt nature suggest to him, and urge him to commit.

To alter this conduct, and to make it the reverse of what it is, is the first, the chief work that a boy has set before him when he enters upon public-school or college life. This is his moral education. He must learn to speak the truth, by checking and punishing himself every time that he is guilty of a falsehood. He must curb his temper, and hold it in hand, as a horseman holds the restive, fiery animal on which he is mounted. He must learn to regard his companions as so many brothers, and treat them as he himself would wish to be treated. He must bring his will into subjection to the will of others, and thus become obedient. Above all things, he must watch over his thoughts, and his heart, that when the most wicked one shoots into his mind any of those fiery sparks with which he inflames our baser passions, he may at once extinguish them. Then he will never be guilty of any filthy act, nor become the slave of that foul, debasing passion, which lays waste so many a fair, bright soul that ought to be the paradise of God.

Such is the moral work that is put before you at the beginning of this scholastic year. Although it is the main work of your school-life, yet the other, which has to do with

your intellectual powers, is no less worthy of all the energy that you are able to bring to bear upon it.

It is the will of your parents that you should devote to it all possible attention ; on it will depend your success in life ; by accomplishing it you will be fulfilling the will of God, and undergoing that penance of labour which is imposed upon mankind as one of the penalties of sin.

What, then, have you to do, in order to accomplish the work of educating or developing your intellectual faculties ? In the first place, you must be determined to employ the time for study, in *study*, and in nothing else. You must not read, nor write letters, nor draw, nor paint, nor do anything else that is not the work which you have to do at that particular time. When you are face to face with the subject which you are set to master, you must endeavour to concentrate upon it all your powers, till you have conquered the difficulties which it presents. This concentration will burn up these difficulties, just as what you call the burning-glass focusses the rays of the sun upon any object, and speedily sets it on fire and consumes it. When weary, do not relax your efforts, but persevere ; and should you perceive that your mind has wandered, at once recall it, and force it to remain fixed upon that which should engage its attention. If before the time for repetition you are able to master that which you are set to learn, do not idle, but take up something else and never waste a moment. Thus you will acquire those qualities which are the result of a good intellectual training—that is to say, concentration and industry, qualities which will enable you to cope with all the difficulties of life. Armed with these two, you will beat down every obstacle that opposes your intelligence in the acquisition of knowledge.

Do not, as so many boys unfortunately do, give yourself up to listless day-dreaming. When they meet with a difficulty in their classical authors, or in their mathematical text-books, instead of bravely grappling with it, as with an antagonist, they lose courage and give way before it, as if it were beyond their strength. Then they busy themselves with

useless trifles, or sit either staring into vacancy, lamenting over the pleasures and the amusements of the holidays, or building for themselves airy castles in which they are to pass their future lives, in the enjoyment of honour, wealth, power, and every delight that their fancy is able to conjure up. These golden visions are often enough rudely dissolved into thin air by the presiding professor ; and well is it for the listless idler that they are, otherwise he might become the slave of this pernicious luxury, and turn out a useless wastrel, incapable of filling any office in this rough, matter-of-fact world.

Therefore, on this the opening day of the new scholastic year, firmly resolve not to be of the number of those who waste the opportunities afforded them of labouring at the work of their education. Let each of you say to himself : " I am sent here with a definite purpose set before me. I have, with the aid of my masters, to train myself, both in virtue and in learning. My intellect and my heart are the fields of my labour. On my intellect I will bring to bear persevering, energetic labour. Idleness shall not be suffered to paralyse my efforts. Not a moment of my time shall be misapplied, but all shall be spent upon the work which my parents and God have appointed for me. As for my heart, or my moral being, that too shall receive from me special care, as being of far more importance than is my intellectual well-being. I will mark the inclinations which manifest themselves in my soul. Those which are evil, I will endeavour to pluck up and cast out. I will strive always to speak the truth, to curb my temper, to obey the wishes of my Superiors, to set a guard over my thoughts, and to clothe myself with modesty as with a garment of honour."

If you form resolutions such as these, and daily renew the first effort which you make to carry them into effect, you will be able, at the close of the scholastic year, to say to Our divine Lord : " I have fought the good fight, I have accomplished my course, I have kept the faith ".

HUMAN RESPECT.

WHEN a boy first leaves his home, and he is ushered into the little world of a great public-school, one of the most formidable hindrances of his progress in the virtue which he learnt at his mother's knee, is the dread of what his companions will either think or say of his conduct. This dread is called "human respect". It is a truckling to the opinions, the prejudices, and the vices of those with whom our lot in life is cast. To that ridiculous dread but too many, unfortunately, sacrifice their conscience. They tremble before a phantom, and imagine that to be a lion which after all is only a very silly, but not by any means harmless sheep.

Now, no upright, virtuous boy would like to be called a coward, especially when through his cowardice he is induced to offend God and incur the danger of being for ever separated from Him. Yet, these are the evils which follow in the train of human respect.

In the sanctuary of his home, there have been instilled into a boy's heart high principles, a contempt of wrong-doing, a scorn of untruthfulness, a love of honesty, of obedience, of modesty. A very brief intercourse with those among whom he now lives will, perhaps, make him painfully aware that some few of them have other principles which are totally opposed to those upon which he has hitherto acted. Evil deeds are not held in all that horror with which he has been accustomed to invest them ; lying may be looked upon as a very venial offence ; rebellion against authority, as a manly, independent spirit, greatly to be admired and cultivated ; the lack of modesty, as a something to be laughed at rather than to be regarded with that horror which the profanation of God's living temple ought to inspire. If the atmosphere which he breathes is suffered by him to penetrate into his moral being, it soon blunts the keen edge of his conscience. He begins to fear to let his ideas upon all these matters be known. He grows to be ashamed of that which once he held in high honour. He shrinks before the sneers of his companions, as a sensitive plant does under the touch of a man's hand. He

accepts the opinions current around him. He bends under the yoke of the "set" in which he finds himself, and ends by becoming a slave to their opinions, their errors and their vices: "Lo! he hath become as one of us, knowing both good and evil".

Is not conduct such as this the most abject cowardice? You have principles, and you dare not act upon them. Your conscience cries out, and you are afraid to listen to and obey it. Your sense of dutifulness and of honour is outraged, and you tremble lest your face or your words should betray the horror which you feel. What would you think if any of your companions were to attempt to force you to arrange your study in such a way as to suit his taste; to select as your friends only those of whom he approves; to regulate the times at which you shall correspond with your parents; to choose for you your style of dress; to settle for you your mode of speech and the amount of money which you shall spend? You would regard his conduct as an impertinent interference with your personal liberty. No words could adequately express your indignation. Yet you tamely submit to his tyranny in dictating to you what your action must be in your relations with God! You first ask yourself, not what God will think of you, but what he will think of you; not what God will say of you, but what he and others as worthless and as disreputable as he is will say of you. This is cowardice which ought to bring upon your face a burning blush of shame.

This cowardly compliance is bad enough when regarded simply as a want of courage; it is worse than mere cowardice; it is a sin against God, when we look at it as a preference of the esteem of the creature, to compliance with the law of God.

While the soul is still a wayfarer in this world of trial, and is left by God in the hands of its own counsel, with perfect freedom to reject good and to choose evil, two suitors present themselves before it, craving for its obedience and its love. The devil comes with his hands full of seductive, earthly treasures; beauty, to satisfy the eye; pleasure, to gratify the heart; honour, to excite its ambition; wealth, to stir up its

cupidity. All these are sensible, tangible goods ; they attract the whole man as forcibly as a magnet attracts to its embrace a piece of glittering steel. God, by the voice of His Holy Spirit, speaks to it of good things which fall not beneath the ken of the senses,—profound peace for the heart, boundless truth for the intelligence, God for the love of the will, heaven for the immortal crown, the everlasting home of the soul.

The unchangeable law of God, and the light of conscience are there to guide you in your choice. God has made you what you are. Every good thing that you possess comes from Him. He has died for you. His blood has washed you clean from the filth of your sins. It has purchased for you a right to the possession of everlasting bliss. The devil is your enemy. He flatters only to ensnare and destroy you. He will exult over you if you yield to him, and will scorn and torture you in the prison of hell. Who, then, is this that appears to determine your choice ? It is the phantom "human respect" ! In the guise of some frivolous, idle, vicious boy, it stands there with the smile of scorn upon its face, with a sneer upon its lips ! If you fear to encounter so contemptible an enemy, and like a coward flee from it, you sacrifice to it your conscience, nay, more, your God—Jesus Who died to save you. Which of these two masters will you choose ? "Whom will you that I release unto you, Barabbas the robber and murderer, or Jesus Who is called the Christ ?" You choose the murderer and reject your Lord. Of what a criminal insult are you guilty ! You contemn Jesus Christ, for the sake of those who laugh at you for your weakness, and in their hearts scorn you for your dastardly cowardice !

Human respect not only makes men cowardly and criminal, but exposes them to the danger of eternal damnation. For the grace of God does not flee away at once and for ever when it is rejected and trampled under foot for the sake of men so weak, so cowardly and so criminal as are those who bend their necks beneath the iron yoke of sin. It comes back again and again, pleading with its soft, low voice, and using every expedient to save those for whom Christ

died. It speaks to the conscience with a voice which rouses it from its lethargic sleep. It paints in vivid colours before its eyes the great truths of death, of eternity, of hell. The soul, thoroughly shaken by the terrors which these fail not to conjure up, resolves to break its chains and serve God with its whole strength, with its whole will. But once again the phantom, human respect, rises before it stern and menacing. "What! are you to be frightened like a child by the silly talk of priests? Be not weak-minded! Conscience is but a coward's counsellor. What a laugh will be raised when your companions hear that you have become pious! Pious, forsooth! How well they know you! They will call you a hypocrite, a child, a fool." Fear but too often prevails, and the Angels of God are forced to turn aside and weep over another opportunity lost, another drop added to the measure of the soul's iniquities.

God does not grow weary, for the simple reason that the measure is not yet filled up. He comes again to knock at the door of that boy's heart. He sends the Angel of death into the School. One day a companion is missed from the playground and the class-room. He is ill. He grows worse. He is in danger. The boys are struck with fear. A few days, a week, or even two pass away, and he is no more! He was, perhaps, one of those who had not been leading a good life. He was well known to you. He has appeared before God; he has been judged; he has gone to his own place. You are left. There is time to repent. You resolve to lead a better life. You make the attempt. You go on for some time. Then you observe a sinister smile upon the faces of your slave-masters. You hear their hints, their sarcastic remarks at your wonderful conversion. Your courage fails, and another grace is lost, another drop is added to the measure of your iniquities.

Nay, have there not been boys who have grown up to be men, and who, as men, have been unable to break the chains of human respect which they forged for themselves at School? They carried their cowardice and their criminality into their lives as men of the world. Now see what a danger it is to their

eternal salvation ! Often have they acted towards God and His grace as they were wont to act in their school-days. Grace has come, and it has been rejected. Death has come as a last grace. The proximity of the judgment-seat, and the now almost audible thunders of hell, will surely work a wondrous conversion. This will be the change of the right hand of the Most High. But human respect has still a mighty hold upon them, for its bonds are as bonds of brass and as hoops of steel. They fear to be looked upon as cowards ; as terrified into repentance by death ; as weak-minded. They shrink from the threat of the phantom ; they do not call in the minister of religion ; they go before their God with all their sins and imperfections on their heads. These are the dangers to which this miserable phantom exposes those who submit their souls to its sway. Oh ! what dangerous, what criminal folly is this !

Therefore, be brave and resist the attempts of human respect to number you among its miserable victims. Have the courage of your principles. Ask God to give you strength to resist. Never yield even in matters which appear very trivial. Be brave in the beginning. Those who are resolute, who hold their ground, compel the admiration and the respect of even those who try to seduce them from the path of duty ; for even the vicious cannot help respecting those who are proof against their scorn, and often, with downcast eye and look abashed, confess the beauty of virtue and give to it their unqualified homage.

A FORGIVING SPIRIT.

WHEN we say that no boy is perfect, that no boy is an Angel, we are making a statement which might be set down as a truism not likely to be called in question, or to be contradicted. When massed together in considerable numbers at School, they do not suddenly change their nature and become different beings. Consequently, in great public schools we have large bodies of these imperfect mortals brought into very close and familiar contact. The result may easily be conjectured. There is very often strife, conflict, the clashing against one

another of the various faults and imperfections in their respective characters. From this collision of fault with fault, of imperfection with imperfection, what wonder is it that the sparks of anger should flash forth, that the fire of enmity and hatred should be enkindled, and that the thirst for revenge should be engendered by its heat. Now the Christian schoolboy must at once set his finger upon these sparks, must extinguish this flame, must not attempt to satisfy this thirst. He must, on the contrary, by every means in his power endeavour to acquire a forgiving spirit. Do you ask me wherefore he should do so? I will endeavour to give you an answer.

You must cultivate in your heart a forgiving spirit, because you cannot otherwise taste the sweets of even earthly happiness. To be happy, you must be at rest in your own soul. Now, a soul that is ever ready to resent a rude word, an unkind act, a scornful look; to break into a storm of anger; to assert itself by pugnacity, and to harbour the desire of revenge, has taken to its bosom a viper that will bite with poisoned tooth, and make it impossible ever to taste repose. Your companion has in some way injured you. You resolve to pay him back a hundred-fold. Whenever you see him, the tempest of wrath lashes you into fury. The sound of his voice jars upon your ear, as a sudden crash does upon the senses of a nervous man. The slightest contact with him pains you as much as a rough hand laid heavily upon a recent wound. His success in the schools, his victory in the games, fires you with jealousy; he fails in some of his undertakings, and you rejoice; he is humbled, and you exult over his downfall; he is punished, and you gloat over his pain with a sort of fiendish delight. He is a very thorn in your flesh, a stake in your eye, a lash to your back. There is no rest, no peace, no happiness for your perturbed spirit. He is as a drop of gall in your cup of pleasure, as a spectre at your banquets, as a hideous nightmare to your sleep. If you persist in your desire for revenge, then farewell to all happiness! An unforgiving spirit is its own punishment. Fire is not more antagonistic to water, than an unforgiving spirit is to even your earthly happiness. Therefore, if you wish to be happy in your school-life, exorcise

this demon from your soul, and let the divine spirit of brotherly love, of Christ-like charity, make of it a sanctuary in which to dwell.

You must cultivate a forgiving spirit, because your eternal interests demand it. Are you not the child of God, the brother of Jesus Christ? If you pretend to lay claim to that high dignity, and to the eternal inheritance which belongs to you, in consequence of it, you must become like unto God, like unto Christ. If you be not, your heavenly Father will not acknowledge you as His child, and He will reject your claim to an eternal kingdom. How, then, does God, how does Christ, act in this matter of forgiving injuries? God is at every moment most grievously, most foully injured by us wretched creatures, who to Him owe everything that we possess. Does He harbour against us an unforgiving spirit? No; He pours out upon us, as well as upon His faithful servants, the bright and joyous sunshine. He drops down the gentle rain from heaven upon our fields, as well as upon theirs. He suffers us to breathe the healthful breath of life. He does not shoot forth upon us the arrows of death. He is patient, He is forgiving.

Did Jesus Christ harbour in His bosom an unforgiving spirit against His enemies? No; I see Him bound by them, as a common malefactor; hurried before a hostile tribunal; scourged as an evil doer; crowned in derision, and cruelly mocked; condemned to die; and, at last, nailed to the Cross. What are those words that I hear breaking from His lips, just before that loud cry with which He gave up the ghost? Are they words of anger, a curse, a prayer for vengeance? No; He prays for pardon: "Father! forgive them; they know not what they do!" Unless you resemble Christ, you are none of His, He is not your brother, you cannot be heir with Him to an eternal kingdom.

Nay, if you will not forgive, you dry up the very fountain of salvation. You have sinned. Perhaps you have often and grievously sinned. Your soul is stained with guilt so heinous that it will for ever bar against you the golden gates to bliss. Only the grace of God can wash away those fatal

stains. But by what means are you to draw down upon yourself those saving waters? Surely it is by humble prayer. Therefore, kneel with all speed, and earnestly beg the mercy of God. The best prayer that you can use is that which Jesus Himself has taught. Have courage! He bids you call Him "Father"; He tells you to pray that He may be honoured; may become King of all hearts; may have His will done upon earth as it is done in heaven; to ask Him to give you your daily bread. Why do you hesitate? Why not go on? The next is the petition which will save you, by obtaining for you the forgiveness of your sins. "Forgive me my sins!" Ah! you stop again! "Forgive me my sins——" On what condition, and in what proportion? "Alas! on condition that I forgive those who have sinned against me, and in the same proportion as I forgive them." These are the words of Christ, the eternal Judge. Therefore, you must cultivate a forgiving spirit, because your eternal interests demand it.

Is anything further required to bend your will, and make you set aside your wrath, your pugnacity, your unforgiving spirit? Well, then, study attentively the teaching of Jesus, Who will one day, as your Judge, have to determine your eternal destiny. St. Peter, after once hearing Him insist so strongly upon the necessity for a forgiving spirit, asked Him whether it would not suffice for a man to forgive an offending brother *seven* times. Our Lord answered that the pardon should be given "seventy times seven times," that is to say, it must be given always. Further to illustrate His meaning, He brought before the notice of those to whom He spoke, the case of two men, the first of whom owed his master the enormous sum of 10,000 talents, and the second, the paltry sum of 100 pence, contracted towards him who himself might justly be called an imperial debtor. The first, on being required to pay back the almost fabulous amount of his debt, fell upon his knees, and, by his piteous prayer, obtained a generous remission of the whole amount due. But on leaving the presence of his indulgent master, he met the poor wretch who owed him 100 pence. Rudely and roughly laying

hold of him, he demanded instant payment of the debt. The poor man prayed for a little respite, that he might be able to gather together the sum that should satisfy his cruel creditor. But the inhuman wretch rejected his prayer and had him cast into prison.

Now this is just your own case. You are God's debtor on account of your innumerable and grievous sins. You ask Him for pardon, and He grants your request. Your school-companion sins against you by a paltry word, or an inconsiderate act, or a scornful look. Forgetful of the mercy shown to yourself, you will not pardon him. What does Our Lord say happened to the merciless steward? His master cast him into a narrow prison-house ; he sold his wife, his children and all that he possessed ; condemned him never to be freed till he had paid the last farthing—that is to say—he never liberated him from the prison into which he had been cast, for that prison is hell! Our Lord concludes this terrible Parable, with these words : “ So shall my heavenly Father do to you, unless you forgive your brother from your heart ”.

Is there not, then, some other way of appeasing the wrath of God, some means of obtaining pardon without being compelled to forego the sweets of revenge? “ Might not I offer some victim in sacrifice, and so win His favour? ” No ; there is no other way, no other means. For Our Lord says : “ If thou dost offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou rememberest that thy brother hath anything against thee ; leave there thy gift before the altar, go first and be reconciled with thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift ”. God prefers mercy, pardon, forgiveness, to sacrifice. You must sacrifice your anger, your resentment, your thirst for revenge. Do you wish to be treated as that unjust and merciless steward was? If you do not, forgive your enemies ; forgive them from the bottom of your heart. Do you wish to obtain the pardon of your sins? Then pardon the offence committed against you. Do you wish to enter the kingdom of God? Then let your soul be a kingdom whence the demon of vengeance is banished.

You must cultivate a forgiving spirit if you wish to lead a happy life in this world ; you must cultivate it, if you wish to secure your eternal interests ; you must cultivate it, if you wish to observe one of the precepts dearest to the heart of Jesus. Have that spirit of charity, cling to it, never sacrifice it to your vengeance, and it will be for you a golden key which will unlock the gates of the kingdom of God.

OPENING OF THE ANNUAL RETREAT.¹

THIS evening, you enter upon the great, the important duty of your annual Retreat, which the wisdom as well as the fatherly care of your Superiors provides for you. It is for most of you, but one of many other spiritual Retreats in which you have taken part ; for some of you it is the first of which you will have experience ; for all, without exception, it is a great grace which may be productive of much good, a grace for the use or the abuse of which you will have to render a strict account unto God. You, therefore, who for the first time are about to go through the holy exercises of these few days, will naturally enough wish to know what a Retreat is, what it is meant to do for your souls, and in what way you may draw from it all the good that it is intended to effect. I will endeavour so to answer each of these questions as to fill your hearts with an earnest desire to make a good Retreat, and thereby to derive from it all the benefit which it will not fail to procure for you.

A "retreat" means a withdrawing from something in which we have been engaged ; a going apart from something with which we are in daily, perhaps in hourly communication ; a cessation from occupying ourselves in some pursuit which engrosses our attention. When, for instance, an army is either defeated or it discovers that the enemy opposed to it is too strong to be attacked, it withdraws from its position ; it ceases to hold the ground which it occupied, and falls back

¹ The Lectures between this page and page 250 are intended for the time of Retreat.

upon some place more advantageous to it. It retreats. When a boy is sent by one of his masters to convey a message to one of his companions, he seeks him out, and finding him in the public playroom endeavours to transmit to him the import of what he has been commissioned to communicate. But owing to the uproar of the noisy game going on, he finds it next to impossible to make his schoolfellow clearly comprehend what it is that the professor wishes him to know. He, therefore, invites him to go apart from the tumult in which he is, as it were, submerged, and then with ease makes him comprehend what he wishes to impart to him. He causes him to retreat from the noise which rendered it impossible for him to hear. Again ; if one of you is deeply engrossed in the perusal of some interesting book, and there should chance to enter the library a companion who straightway begins to tell to those assembled there some piece of information which all are anxious to hear, the reader—if he wishes to grasp the full import of it—must first give up or cease reading the entrancing story absorbing his attention.

Now, a spiritual Retreat means all this. It is a withdrawing from your every-day work. There is no study ; there is no class-work ; there is no public recreation ; there are no games ; there is no talking. Your books are closed ; your library is not used ; you do not indulge in your usual games ; your professors do not give their lectures ; in one word, you withdraw from the occupations which fill up the hours of your ordinary, every-day life.

Now that you know the meaning of a Retreat, you will ask, in the next place, what is this withdrawal from your ordinary school-life intended to effect ? The end or purpose of it is to enable you to obtain right notions about some of the momentous truths that underlie your existence and that are of the utmost importance for your eternal well-being. For, living as you are of necessity compelled to live by reason of your duties, there are around you many objects which hinder you from obtaining these clear and necessary notions about these all-important matters. Earthly things compass you about. The bright world with all its attractions

is on every side of you ; the azure sky above your head, the budding flowers at your feet, the golden sunshine filling you with joy, the beauty of creatures drawing to themselves the love of your heart. Before you, as an object or end of your existence, there is the career which either you yourself have chosen or your parents have designed for you—the army, the law, medicine, the Church, or the prosaic path of commerce, which if it does not lead to glory and renown, oftentimes leads at least to great wealth. You are at College to prepare yourself for one or for another of these professions. Besides these earthly things which compass you about, you have a body keenly alive to pleasure ; you have a soul full of strange thoughts, of undefined longings, of high aspirations ; you have companions who interest you, occupy your thoughts, and absorb your affections. These external things lay siege to your heart ; they fill it ; they cause you to throw yourself with ardour into your school-life with its contests, its studies, its games, its pleasures. You look beyond these preparatory matters to the years yet in store for you, when school-life shall have come to an end, and promise yourself wealth, fame, pleasure. You will then gratify the longings of your heart and of your intellect. The hopes and the anticipations engendered by these forecasts of the future fill up your whole being, and, because you are full of them, there is a probability that this fact may cause you to overlook a most important truth.

What is that truth ? That you are not in the world, that you were not created for these things which you purpose to make the end of your existence. They will all pass away, and the fact that they are essentially transitory day by day impresses itself upon the mind of even the most thoughtless. Hence the startling questions which, from time to time, rise up within you and call for an answer. “ Whence do I come ? I come from God ! Whither am I going ? I am going to eternity ! By what way must I, perforce, enter upon that never-ending state of being ? I must enter it by the way of death ! What will happen to me at that dread moment ? I shall be judged ! What will be the outcome of that

judgment? I shall be either rewarded or punished!" The conclusion forced upon those who give ear to these questionings is, that preparation must be made to meet this judgment, to avoid eternal punishment, to secure eternal felicity. But in order to arrive at that conclusion, the noise around you must be hushed, the occupations engaging your attention must be laid aside, the created things absorbing your affections must be estimated at their true value. It is to silence this tumult, to rid yourself of these distracting occupations, and to free yourself from these absorbing affections, that you go into Retreat. In the silence which that Retreat causes to reign around you, in its freedom from distracting duties, and worrying cares, the great truths of existence, at times presenting themselves in a dim, ghost-like fashion before your mind, will stand out before it clear, sharp-cut, well defined. They will imprint themselves upon your intelligence. They will make you see the necessity for promptly acting upon the conclusions which your common-sense will cause you to form. This is the end or purpose for which you enter a Retreat.

If you wish to see, in a concrete form, the advantage which you may hope for by going through the exercises usually employed during the few days which it will last, consider the effect which a compulsory Retreat produced in the soul of one who from being an atheist became in consequence of it a most fervent Catholic. During the troubrous times of the great French Revolution, the celebrated Isnard became a member of the Convention. He was a bitter enemy of priests and of the religion which they taught. He had so little regard for God, that in a public assembly he cried out: "The law is my God, I know no other". In his turn, like most of the great leaders of the day, he fell under the suspicion of the clique who so tyrannically held the country under their feet. To escape the vengeance with which they threatened him, he fled from the sight of men, and hid himself in a cellar in the Faubourg St. Antoine. There, in want the direst that man can suffer, without light, without fire, with scanty food, with death continually staring him in the face, he fell back upon his thoughts. Whence do I come? Whither do I go? By

what way? During the space of sixteen months, for fifteen hours of the day, he thought on these momentous questions. His thoughts made him pray. His prayer brought light into his darkened soul. The eyes of his mind were opened and he at last arrived at these conclusions: "There is a God, there is an eternity, there is a heaven of rewards, there is a hell of eternal punishments". At the point at which a child starts in his catechism when he says: "I believe in God!" Isnard made this discovery. It converted him, and changed him from an unbeliever into a devout, fervent, humble Christian.

But in order that the Retreat may produce in your soul the wondrous effects which are the ordinary outcome of it when it is well made, there are two things that you must not fail to do. You must *think*, and you must *pray*. You must think upon the great truths that are put before you; you must turn them over in your mind; you must let them sink into your heart. You must think on the past; for the past is very often like a tangled skein of thread. It is all confusion. In it there are innumerable sins; there are, perhaps, confessions that have been badly made; communions about which you entertain grave fears; scandals which have laid desolate the hearts of others; words that have borne evil fruit; and a thousand negligences and offences of a minor sort that have robbed your life of merit before God. That tangled skein must be unravelled; all doubts must be settled; all the evil consequences of sin rectified, as far at least as that is possible. You must think of the present, to introduce into its irregularities some kind of order, and by so doing to reform it. You must think of the future, and provide for it, by making strong resolutions to avoid everything that has made your past, one long chain of offences against your good God.

Not only you must think, but you must *pray*. Thought without prayer is of little avail; for conversion from evil unto good, from laxity unto fervour, from indifference unto earnestness, is not the work of the intellect only, but of the heart also. Most men are, as a rule, sufficiently well informed about the great truths of faith. They see clearly enough all the duties that these truths impose upon them. Yet they do not accomplish

what their knowledge points out to them and tells them in a most uncompromising manner must be done. What is the reason of this? Is it because their heart or will is not moved. The intellect with all its clear conceptions and logical force, cannot do this. Only the grace of God is able to effect it, and cause the heart or will to do what is right. How then is this grace to be obtained? It is obtained by humble, fervent prayer. Therefore, you must not only think, but pray. Pray for light to know your sins. Pray for sorrow to grieve for them. Pray for strength to have done with them, and manfully to resist every temptation ever again to repeat them.

Since, then, from what has been said you now know what a Retreat is, what it is meant for, and in what way you may make it profitable unto eternal life, form a strong resolution this night to do your utmost, by thought, and by prayer, to reap from it all the advantages which it is intended to procure. With this end in view, be careful to keep the silence which is so stringently enjoined during times of Retreat, for it is chiefly when every other tongue is silent that God speaks to the heart. Withdraw yourself not only from converse with others, but from all thought about your ordinary occupations. Do not busy yourself with projects of study, or of games. Do not take with you any of the cares which at other times may reasonably claim your attention. After each of the discourses, try to recall what has been said, and revolve it in your mind. Pray for grace to avoid that against which they caution you, and to practice that which they advise you to do. If you act thus, you will come forth from this Retreat with a heart free from every stain of sin, and with a will strengthened by God's grace and firmly resolved henceforth to live only for God, and for the good things of eternity.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE.

WHO is there that can ever forget his first entrance into public-school life? The severance from home, the parting from friends, the strange faces, and the new, busy life, swirling like a noisy, swiftly flowing river everywhere around him, make

an impression so deep as to be indelible. One of the ideas which that first appearance upon the stage of the boy-world has stamped upon his memory, is the consciousness of his personal identity which the inquisitiveness of his companions made even painfully evident to him. "Who are you? Where do you come from? What are you going to be?" These were the inquiries which, being dinned into his ears with wearisome iteration, focussed the light of his mind upon himself and upon the purpose of his life at School.

It would be well for you now, while you are still young, while you are still under the discipline of your school-life, to put to yourselves these searching questions, not to discover what is the object of your life in this house of education, but to bring out clearly before your mind, what is the purpose or end of your existence, of your life in the world.

You are in the world, to win for yourself the possession of God. To secure for yourself that prize, is your supreme, your only good. To lose it, is your supreme, your only evil. Therefore, try, by a little serious thought, so deeply to impress upon yourself this truth, that nothing will be able to erase it from your intelligence.

Who are you? You are a creature composed of a body and a soul. Your body will perish in the grave; but it will be restored to you at the general resurrection. Your soul is immortal; it will live for ever. Whence do you come? If you trace back your ancestry from the honoured and beloved parents by whose instrumentality you were brought into existence, to the source whence the stream of your life has taken its rise, you will come at last to Adam, who himself came direct from the hands of God. Therefore, you came from God. In creating you that all-powerful Being might have destined you to till the earth out of which His hands fashioned your bodily frame, or to rule the visible world which He made to be your temporary abode, or to serve those glorious Angels who are the first-born among His creatures. In His infinite mercy and goodness He did not do so. He designed for you an indefinitely nobler end. You are the most excellent of His visible creatures, their king, embodying in yourself

the excellences of them all. You have being, like the stones and the brute earth beneath your feet ; you have a vegetative life, like the plants and the trees that wave around you ; you have a sensitive, animal life, like the beasts with which the earth is peopled ; you have an intelligent soul, like the angelic spirits who minister round the throne of God. As king of the earth, God destined you to be the connecting link between His visible creation and Himself. You are to be its mouthpiece, to praise and thank Him for its creation ; its high priest, to offer to Him the sacrifice of its homage and praise. He made you for this purpose ; and the reward of your faithful duty is to be, Himself. Therefore, God is the end or purpose of your existence in this world.

If He had made you for anything else, then that object would fully satisfy all the cravings of your nature ; for to fulfil the purpose of its existence, constitutes the perfection of every creature ; and that perfection once attained, completes or fills up the measure of the capabilities of its happiness. But in this world is there anything that can fill up your soul's craving for happiness ? Knowledge cannot content the vast capacity of your intelligence for truth. Wealth has no power to appease the cravings of your heart. Pleasure may dull, but it cannot satiate the hunger of your senses. Power can amuse for a while, but it cannot adequately satisfy your ambition. One who more than any other mortal had all these earthly goods within the hollow of his hand, found in them nothing but vanity and affliction of spirit. Therefore, since these created things cannot satisfy you, it is an evident proof that you were never made for them. No ; God made you for Himself, and your heart will never find rest, till it repose in Him.

What is the consequence that flows directly from this truth ? It is that the winning of God, by a faithful observance of His holy law, is the supreme good of every man who is born into this world. This is a truth which at present does not shine with a very brilliant light before our feeble intelligence. Round about us there are so many other apparently good things stretching forth their hands to us for our acceptance, clamouring

for our love, and absorbing our attention, that the invisible God is but as a far off, mist-enveloped object, dimmed and blurred before our imperfect sight, and making but a weak appeal to the love of our hearts. To estimate at its true value the worth of these noisy claimants for our love, we need a powerful light which will show to us their nature. This light is the lamp that is held in the hand of Death. When he turns its brilliant beams upon these goods of earth, what do we think of them? They are empty, vain, worthless things. Power has gone from the hands of the mighty ; the coffers of the wealthy are empty ; the wisdom of the wise is as folly ; the pleasures of the worldling are as gall mingled with wine. They all slip from the hands that clutched them. Nothing remains. Only God remains. He is the supreme good. He is to be the happiness of the human soul for all eternity. To be happy, the soul must gaze for ever upon the eternal truth ; it must feast its eyes upon that never-fading beauty ; it must enjoy that good which will never pall upon its sense. How shall we bring home to your intelligence this unutterable happiness? Alas! when we attempt to speak of it, we know not what to say. We can but tell you that you will be with God ; that He will love you ; and that you will love Him with all the fiery energy of your immortal soul. The happiness begotten of that love is so intense, that St. Paul who had been rapt to the third heaven, and who both saw and heard things not given to man to utter, could say nothing more of them than that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived what things God has in store for those who love Him". Think of the joy which you feel when after a long year of study, you return to your happy homes ; think of the mother's fond embrace ; the warm grasp of the father's hand ; the bright circle that once again receives you into its midst. Intensify that joy a thousand-fold ; remember that the heart which will press you to itself, is the sacred heart of Jesus ; that the mother who will imprint her kiss of love upon your brow, is the immaculate Virgin ; that the circle which will welcome you, is composed of the Saints and the Angels of God ; and then you will have some faint idea of the supreme good

that is in store for you. To win it for themselves, the Saints have looked upon all the joys, the honours, and the wealth of the world, as so much dross to be trampled under foot. Therefore, resolve to imitate their glorious example, and you also will learn, even here below, that God is your supreme, your only good.

If this is true, then it is also true that to lose Him is your only, your supreme evil. Does this require any proof? If you think that it does, then reflect on the following truths, for they will convince even the feeblest intelligence that gives them an impartial hearing.

God has given to you life. You exist. You will now never cease to be. Death is but the closing of your eyes upon this shifting scene of life, and the opening of them amid the never-ending good things of eternity. You will fall into the hands of the living, eternal God. All things else have disappeared. As far as you are concerned, only God and yourself remain. Do not believe the false philosophers of this world when they tell you, that all men will be saved. Christ's words brand this doctrine as a lie. He says that there will be but two vast companies of men—the blessed and the reprobate. The blessed, He will call to His kingdom; the reprobate, He will drive down accursed into hell. What is hell? It is the loss of God! It is the ever-present consciousness that He is worthy of all love, and that they cannot love Him. It is the ever-raging fire of hatred against Him Whom they would die a thousand deaths to be able to love. It is the ever-present knowledge that to save them He has done everything required by divine justice; that He has shed His blood for them; and that they have frustrated His efforts and trampled under foot the grace that would have linked them to Him for ever. This is the supreme evil, to have lost God, to have lost Him for ever, and never for a single moment to be able to forget that irreparable loss.

Add to this the fire that will never be extinguished; the fire in which they are plunged as a sponge is plunged into water; as a fish is in the depths of the sea. Fire for their meat and their drink; fire for their couch of repose; fire for

eye and for ear ; fire for heart and for brain. We say nothing of the company of the damned ; of their despair and their horrible blasphemies against God. We say nothing of the rage and the malice of the fallen Angels who will wreak upon the images of God the vengeance which they dare not vent upon God. All these are nothing to the loss of God. That is the only, the supreme evil.

O ! you that now read these words, you that now have time and opportunities for saving your immortal souls, do not close your eyes to these eternal truths ! Do not stifle the fear which they raise in your mind ! Let that fear penetrate your flesh and your intelligence. It will be for you the beginning of wisdom. Let it burn into your soul these three great truths : God is your last end ; to win Him is your supreme, your only good ; to lose Him is your supreme, your only evil. On the storm-swept ocean of this life, they will be to you as a pharos-light that will guide you into the haven of eternal rest.

NATURE OF MORTAL SIN.

THE purpose for which you are in the world, is not so to develop your bodily powers and your intellectual faculties as that by their instrumentality you may win for yourself a good position in life, and pass your days in ease and comfort. To accomplish this, is after all but a very secondary end of your existence. The real purpose which God has put before you, is to gain eternal happiness by observing His law, and so, to have Him as "your reward exceeding great". There is only one thing that is able to frustrate this design of God and deprive you of the crown destined for you. That is mortal sin. What is this evil which is able to do you so grievous, so irreparable a wrong ? It is a disobedience to the law of God in a grave matter, a disobedience of which you may be guilty by thought or by desire, by hearing or by speech ; by doing that which it forbids you to do, or by omitting that which it commands you to perform. It is, as theologians teach, an evil of the deepest dye, being at one

and the same time an act of gross injustice against God, of contempt of His divine majesty, of base ingratitude, and of horrible impiety.

If you penetrate, by means of serious and prayerful meditation, into each of the elements which constitute the malice of this dreadful evil, you will conceive so great a horror of it that you will never again stain your soul with its enormous guilt.

In the first place, then, try to fathom the injustice of which you are guilty when you sin grievously against God. He is your Creator ; that is to say, He drew you from nothingness and made you what you are. From this fact, there are established between you and Him, certain relations which we may, perhaps, be able to bring more clearly before your intelligence, if we illustrate them by examples drawn from objects with which you are familiar. When a sculptor carves a statue, or an artist paints a picture, or a watchmaker puts together the mechanism of a watch, each of them has an absolute right over the statue, or the painting, or the watch, of which in a certain sense he is the creator. He can do with that which is the outcome of his skill, whatsoever he pleases. It belongs to him. He may sell it. He may present it to any of his friends. He may, if it so pleases him, destroy it. If, to suppose an impossibility, he could endow with life and reason the object which he has made, that object would be bound in justice to love him, and to obey him, by carrying out, to the utmost of its power, the purpose or end for which he destined it. It would be obliged to act thus, because his right over it, and its duty to him, in consequence of that right, are correlative, that is to say, the one supposes the other. If it did not perform the duty required of it, or transgressed the will of its maker, that act would be an invasion of his right ; it would be an act of injustice.

Now, you are the creature of God, but in a far more perfect way than is any object fashioned by the hand of man. All that man does in his imperfect creations, is to give to matter already existing, some form or shape which his skill is able to devise. Your very substance is the creation of God. Your

body is His, your soul is His with all its faculties and powers. He has given you reason, intelligence to know Him, and will to adhere to Him. He has made known to you His will in your regard, and He has given to you laws by the observance of which you are able to carry His will into effect. But if you sin, you break His laws ; you go in direct opposition to His designs ; and thereby you are guilty of a gross violation of justice. You are but an atom floating in the air, and He is the great Almighty God. All the rest of creation obeys His will. The sun, the moon, and the stars revolve in their orbits, and accomplish that will. The earth and all that it contains fulfil that will. The Angels and the Saints in trembling awe adore and comply with it. Only man is rebellious. Only man and the damned in hell are bold enough to say : "I will not serve!" What an injustice to the God from Whom you have all that you possess, all that you are ! O, turn from your iniquitous ways, ye that sin, lest ye feel with how heavy a hand the great God can punish your injustices !

Injustice, however, is not the only malice of sin. There is in it an element also of gross contempt of the infinite majesty of God. Besides being your Creator, He is your Father. Therefore, you are bound to prefer Him to all things else, no matter how dear those other objects may be to your sensitive nature. Now, although you are bound to adhere to Him, by every tie that it is possible for you to imagine, yet God has so great a regard for your liberty, that He will not force you to give to Him your love, your dutiful allegiance. He will not have His rational creatures to be slaves. Therefore, He has left you in the hands of your own counsel, with His laws and your own conscience for your advisers. Thus furnished with every means that will enable you to make a right choice, He comes before you and asks you for your obedience, for your love. At the same time, there present themselves before you, all the allurements that created things can offer you. They contend with Him for the possession of your heart. You must give your adhesion to the one or the other of these two claimants. There is no middle course left open to you. You must belong to God, or to His enemies. If you choose them

and reject God, you sin ; for sin is “a turning away from God, and a conversion of the soul’s affections to creatures”—“*Aversio a Deo, conversio ad creaturas*”. In this act consists the gross contempt of the divine Majesty. For, to set Him aside, and to choose that which your own flesh, or the deceitful world, or the malignant devil offers to you, is to do what the Jews did when Pilate set before them, on the one hand a robber and murderer, and on the other the only Son of God, thorn-crowned, bound with thongs, and clothed in the purple robe of scorn. You take to your heart Barabbas, and reject the anointed of the Lord. You cry out, as they did : “Not this man, but Barabbas”. How horrible a crime is it thus to honour so vile a wretch, and to cover with contempt the Lord Who has so highly honoured you ! “I have brought up children, and exalted them, but they have despised me.”

In addition to injustice and contempt, there is in sin an element of the blackest ingratitude. What would you think of a boy who had been adopted by some wealthy nobleman, taken from among the children of his labourers, sent to College, educated and endowed with all his wealth, his name, his dignity, if that boy were then to reject his benefactor and choose, in his stead, one who is that benefactor’s most inveterate enemy ? You would look upon him as a monster unworthy to breathe the breath of life, or to enjoy the company of his fellow-men. Now, what has God done for you ? He has given to you the body with which you sin against Him ; the reason with which you contrive your revolt from His service ; the will with which you make your unholy choice. He has raised you from the dunghill and has set you among the princes of His people. He has made you His heir. To secure you the inheritance which shall one day be yours, He has given up His own life. To requite Him for all His benefits, you trample under foot the claims which He has upon your love and your allegiance, you contemptuously set Him aside for that which is viler and more worthless than the very mire beneath your feet. Is not this ingratitude of so deep a dye as to be hatched in the perverted mind of only some malignant demon ? Surely the generous human heart

which reflects even a little, will turn away with shuddering horror from so vile an act !

To the injustice, the contempt, and the ingratitude of sin, we must add one other element which serves to complete its horrible wickedness. This is its impiety. Speaking of the sinner, God by the mouth of Isaias the Prophet says : "Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins".¹ He complains of the impiety of the sinner's act, because in a certain way that act makes God an accomplice in his sin. How this can be, a little reflection will clearly show. As we all admit and believe with unwavering faith, God is the author of our life. But He is the author of our life, not as an artificer is of the piece of mechanism which he has constructed. That object, once made by him, has an independent existence. It needs no further care from him to enable it to continue its being. It is not so with us. We depend upon God for every moment of our life. He is so intimately connected with us, that if He withdrew His concurrence, we should cease to be. Without that concurrence, we are unable to perform any physical or any intellectual act ; for, with respect to God, we are as an inert mass is with respect to the man who moves it ; we cannot either think or desire, we cannot either will or act unless God acts with us. In consequence of this, you will perhaps say: "Every act that we perform must be good, since God performs it with us, and since it is by His power that we are able to perform it". I answer : "All our actions are good, considered merely as the exercise of our faculties, whether intellectual or physical ; thus the physical act of murder, of robbery, or of any other crime, is good. But the evil of it comes from the intention with which it is performed." From this explanation, you will see in what sense the Prophet says that we make God to serve with our sins.

It is in this that the impiety of mortal sin consists. The sinner uses the powers with which God has endowed him, and the creatures which He has destined for the sinner's use, to offend and insult Him. With his memory, he recalls to his mind evil ; with his imagination, he paints it before his

¹ Isaias xlivi. 24.

mental vision ; with his intelligence, he devises ways and means for its execution ; with his will, he accepts it, embraces it, makes it his own. He employs the members of his body to serve iniquity—the eye to see it, the ear to listen to its voice, the tongue to speak it, the hand to execute it, the feet to run to it, the heart to love it. All these, as St. Paul says, are “the members of Jesus Christ,” therefore, by employing them in the abomination of sin, man is guilty of a grievous impiety against Almighty God. He is making God serve with his sins. Nay, more ; by the act of sin, man practically endeavours to annihilate God : “*peccatum annihilatio Dei*”. In order to gratify his lusts, he wills that God should cease to be, so that no punishment may follow : “the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God”.

His act is as impious as was that of the traitor Apostle, when he kissed His Lord, in order to point Him out to His enemies. It is as impious as were the acts of the soldiers who struck Him, who spat in His face, and bending the knee before Him, flouted Him with cruel mockery. It is as impious as was the deed of those who drove the nails through His hands and His feet, and hoisted Him upon the ignominious cross. This is the light in which St. Paul looked upon sin. According to him, those who are guilty of it, “crucify again unto themselves the Lord of Glory”.

Behold, O children of God ! what you do when you stain your souls with the impiety of sin ! Knowing this, is it possible that you will still go on committing it ? If there be any generosity, any high, any noble sentiment in your hearts, you will have done with it at once and for ever. Be sorry for the past ; detest the sins which have stained and disfigured your youthful years. Have a deep seated horror of their impiety ; endeavour by dutiful service to expiate their black ingratitude ; atone for the contempt which they have cast upon your Lord and Master ; and make what amends you are able for their crying injustice. When the devil, or the world, or your own heart presents for your acceptance this unutterable evil, reject it with horror though it comes before you clothed in all the beauty and the radiance of an

Angel of light. Flee away from it. Call God to your assistance by fervent, earnest prayer, and sin will never bind you in its enslaving and degrading bonds.

PUNISHMENT OF MORTAL SIN.

THE malice of mortal sin is, as we have seen, exceedingly great, inasmuch as it combines in one act four grievous wrongs against Almighty God: it does Him an injustice; it contemns Him; it treats Him with ingratitude; and with impiety. There is another point of view from which we may, perhaps, be able to set before you a more striking picture of its abominable wickedness. If you consider the terrible severity with which He always punishes it, and then reflect upon the infinite tenderness, compassion, goodness and mercy of Him Who with so crushing a blow manifests His wrath against it, you cannot but conclude that there must be in sin a concentrated essence of wickedness, which thus calls forth the implacable anger of Almighty God. For, your natural instinct of justice makes you see, that punishment should be proportioned to the gravity of the fault. Consequently, if it is very severe, very great must have been the fault against which it has been levelled. Let us, therefore, with reverential awe reflect upon some of the signal punishments with which God has visited sin.

Of these, the first that presents itself to our minds, is the punishment of the Angels. They, like man, were tried, to see whether they were worthy of the glory which their Creator destined for them. Their trial is, by some theologians, thought to have been a proposition made to them by God, to adore the future Saviour, God and man. The most highly favoured of them all, the one gifted with an intelligence and a glory surpassing all the rest, disdained to bend that lofty nature before the lowliness of the divinised human nature of the Son of God. He aspired to be equal to God, "and rather than be less, cared not to be at all". Into a fellowship of his pride, he drew a third of the heavenly host, and straightway their great Creator most sternly punished their revolt. They were

cast out of heaven, and hurled headlong from the ethereal vault into the flaming pit of hell, created by their sin to be their prison-house and their place of torture.

There, stripped of their brightness and their glory, exiled from their heavenly home, and deprived of the love of God, the whole energy of their mighty nature is directed to a hopeless war against their Almighty Creator. This is what our faith teaches us concerning the punishment of the Angels.

From our point of view, their sin does not seem to be very great. They sinned by thought. They sinned by desire to be greater than God wished them to be. They desired to be superior to His Son. They willed not to do homage to that Son's human nature. Yet, in that revolt, there must have been something so horrible as to deserve this frightful punishment at the hands of Him Who, being justice itself, never exceeds that which is due to any act, unless indeed it is in rewarding the service paid to Him by His creatures. With these thoughts before your mind, compare your sins with the sin for which they are suffering so much. They sinned only once ; you have sinned, God knows how often ! They sinned by thought ; your sins are sins of thought, of desire, of word, and of act. They followed an evil example set them by their leader and prince ; you not only follow the evil example of others, but having yourself been first corrupted, you instil the poison of your own heart into the innocent hearts of others. They had not one moment given them for repentance ; you have days and months and years allowed you to repair the past, and yet you do not avail yourself of that boundless mercy.

Are there no other lessons which you may learn from their irremediable calamity ? Yes, there are. As they fell though living in heaven, so you may fall though living in the shadow of the sanctuary of God. As they fell by thought, so you, though never guilty of any gross or of any shameful deeds, may yet lose your soul by pride, or anger, or obstinacy, or vainglory. Therefore, be on your guard against all sin. Stand in fear, though living under the shadow of God's wing, and never estimate the evil of sin by its apparent

insignificance. Look at the punishment with which God visits it, and you will be able to form some notion of its abominable malice.

The next instance in which God gives us an idea of the malice of sin, is in the punishment inflicted upon our first parents. He created them, as some believe, in order to fill up the thrones left vacant by the fallen Angels. They were only a little inferior to that godlike race, and were clothed with glory and with honour. God put under their feet this material world with all its beauty and its riches. They were to be its lords and masters, but upon one easy condition : that they should obey the will of their Creator. As a test of their obedience to His will, He forbade them to eat of the fruit of one of the trees planted in the earthly paradise which He had made as their temporary abode. They did not respect this prohibition. Adam, weakly yielding to the solicitations of his consort, shared in her guilty act, and ate of the forbidden fruit. This act constituted their sin. In appearance, it is very slight indeed—the mere plucking and eating of an apple. Yet by so doing, they transgressed the will of God. Now see in what way God punished that transgression. Before their sin, they were the children and friends of God. After their sin, they were deprived of His familiar, fatherly converse. They were treated as servants. They were condemned to die, and were driven out of the garden of delights which the Lord had planted for them. As they represented all future humanity, and consequently held folded in their wills, the wills of all that should spring from their union, God attributed their sin to their posterity as well as to them. Together with its guilt, they had to bear its punishment also. Henceforth man should eat his daily bread only after having won it by the sweat of his brow. His body, so wondrously constructed, with its network of sensitive nerves, should be an instrument on which pain and disease were to play with cunning fingers, and draw from it the dolorous music of woe. His mind so subtle, so keen, so far-reaching in its vision, should be dulled, blunted, and covered with a dark cloud of ignorance, in which enwrapped as in a shroud, it should be liable to fall into the grossest error.

His will, once so strong, so upright, so closely cleaving to God, should be the slave of brutish desires. Life, hitherto so pleasant, so sweet, should be henceforth one long penance, ending at last in anguish, and extinguished by death like the feeble light of a candle. Even when that icy hand has quenched the spark of life, the vengeance of God against sin pursues the inanimate clay which it informed. It is reduced to dust, by passing through the loathsome process of corruption. It becomes the food of worms, a ghastly object which is hidden away deep in the earth, that those who survive may be spared the horror of that awful dissolution.

When a numerous race of men had sprung from the union of our first parents, and had begun to people the earth, the corruption of their perverted nature, speedily began to manifest itself in the commission of every species of abominable wickedness. They were so utterly perverse, that God, in order to express the malice of their transgressions and the abhorrence with which it inspired Him, made use of that startling phrase : "It repenteth Me that I have made man". Among the men who then peopled the earth, He found only one family that had not walked in the ways of the devil. That family He reserved to repeople the world. But upon all the rest, He opened the cataracts of heaven, and burst asunder the boundaries of the great deep, till the invading waters had drowned the tops of the highest mountains, and cleansed the earth of the defilement of sin. Nay, He went so far as to destroy, together with man, all the beasts of the earth, with the exception of those preserved with Noah in the Ark, which floated secure upon the bosom of the destroying waters.

After this signal act of justice upon sin, God wrought yet another, which ought to impress upon us its malice and the utter abomination in which it is held by Him. The Cities of the Plain were wholly given over to filthy sins, which were an outrage upon human nature. The Scripture, in order to give us an idea of their wickedness, says that "the cry of it ascended before God," and called down upon the perpetrators the righteous anger of the Lord. When they had filled up the measure of their iniquities, He sent His Angels to

remove from among the wicked herd His faithful and spotless servants. With all speed, these latter hurried away from the doomed cities, and when they were beyond the reach of any harm, the Lord God rained down upon Sodom and Gomorrha a tempest of fire and of brimstone, a tempest which destroyed the wicked cities and all the country round about, all the inhabitants of the cities, and all things that spring from the earth. Looking back upon the place whence they had escaped, the happy fugitives saw naught of all the wealth, the fruitfulness, and the beauty which had made that land a very paradise of God, but a vast, murky cloud of ashes hanging over the spot like the smoke of a mighty furnace.

Are not these punishments enough to fill our inmost souls with terror at the horrible evil of sin which caused a merciful God to treat it with a severity so appalling? Therefore, be not deceived by the apparent insignificance of sin. Say not to yourself: "It is a small thing; God will not consider it as very harmful; He is so gentle, so merciful, that He will not visit it with the weight of His anger". Look rather upon the signal acts of vengeance which its wickedness, its abominable evil has caused Him to wreak upon the guilty transgressors of His law, and from these terrible examples learn "that it is an evil and a bitter thing to offend the Lord God by sin". When either the devil, or your own fallen nature tempts you to be guilty of it, let the memory of these dire chastisements pierce your mind and your very flesh with salutary fear, which will deter you from any sinful thought, or desire, or word, or deed, and keep your feet upon the narrow way of His holy law.

VENIAL SIN.

I.

THE horrible nature of mortal sin, its diabolical malice, and the severity with which God punishes it, invest it with terrors grim enough to scare away from the commission of it any one who has not lost his faith. It is not so with that lesser

kind of transgression which we call venial sin. This does not separate us from God. It is not punished by the flames of hell ; and, consequently, it does not inspire that fear which is the beginning of wisdom. Therefore, men are guilty of it, and they care as little to avoid it, as if it were free from evil, as if it did not expose them to any danger either in this world or in the world to come. Their answer when reproved for these transgressions is : " It is only a venial sin " ; and because it is only a venial sin, they fear not to tell lies of excuse ; to give way to voluntary distractions at prayer ; to murmur against Superiors ; to be impatient ; to rail with some bitterness against their neighbour ; slightly to detract from his good name ; to indulge in feelings of resentment ; to waste time ; and to be guilty of a hundred other imperfections which each of you will be able to call to mind.

Now, although these and similar acts are " only venial sins," yet there is in them a malice which God detests ; a malice exposing those who are guilty of them to dangers which any one who has a care for his salvation will studiously avoid.

What is venial sin ? It is a thought, or a word, an act, or a desire which, though contrary to the law of God, does not deprive us of divine grace. For the just man is said often to fall into this kind of fault ; and if, though guilty of these minor transgressions, he is yet styled by the Scripture " just," it is evident that he still remains in the favour of God. Moreover, as among men there are certain offences which do not dissolve their friendship for one another, so, also, it is rational to infer that there are committed by men certain slight faults which do not constitute them God's enemies. Of this nature is venial sin. Nevertheless, it is an offence against God. It is an injury done to His divine majesty. It is a revolt against His authority. It is a contempt of His goodness. Looked at in this light, can we ever regard it as a mere trifle ? A trifle it certainly is, if set side by side with the huge evil of deadly sin ; but in itself it cannot be a trifle, if it is that which we have defined it to be. It is an evil compared with which all earthly evils are as nothing, since it is essentially opposed to God—

an opposition which we do not find in earthly ills. God permits these latter to happen to us, in order to purify us from defects ; but He could not, without annihilating Himself, permit the least of these faults which we commit so easily and with so great gaiety of heart, saying : "They are only venial sins". Those things which we look upon as ills, such as poverty, sickness, pain and death, are ills only from our point of view. In reality, they may from God's point of view be very great favours and blessings. Jesus, God and man, took upon Himself ills of this nature, in order to work out our salvation. But the evil of venial sin, He would not and He could not assume, without ceasing to be God.

Therefore, in these apparently trivial faults, there must be a malignity most detestable in the eyes of God. He shows that detestation by the severity with which He punishes it, both in this world and in the world to come.

In the Sacred Scripture, instances of this severity are given. They were inflicted for the commission of faults which, in the estimation of theologians, were "only venial sins". Judge from these, whether venial sin is the trivial, insignificant evil which but too many consider it to be. For gathering a little firewood upon the Sabbath day, God ordered the offender to be stoned to death. For not obeying God's command to return at once to his home after executing God's commission, the Lord caused one of His prophets to be slain by a lion. For indulging her curiosity, by looking back upon the Cities of the Plain, God transformed Lot's wife into a pillar of salt. For some slight distrust of His divine power, He prevented Moses from entering the Promised Land. For a slight sin of vanity in numbering the people, He punished David by causing 70,000 of them to die of pestilence. It is God, the God of justice, that has thus severely punished these seemingly slight transgressions of His law. There must, then, be in them a malice which, in His eyes, is most detestable.

Yet, severely as he visits these faults in men while they are yet wayfarers upon the earth, that severity is as nothing when compared with the punishment allotted to them in

the world to come. In the penal fires of Purgatory these stains, contracted through the commission of venial sins not repented of, are purged away. From the revelations of the Saints, we know what those fires are like. We know the pain which the souls suffer by their temporary separation from God. We know that ages and ages may roll by, and these souls still be kept at a distance from God, amid the waves of that tempestuous ocean of fire. Therefore, let us form for ourselves a right idea of the gravity of venial sin which God, Who is so kind, so merciful, so just, must of necessity visit with chastisement so tremendous. Never let us encourage ourselves to be guilty of a fault, by saying: "It is only a venial sin". No, it is a great evil, as we see from that which it is, and from the severity of God's dealings with it. Therefore, avoid it with scrupulous care. Avoid it, not only on account of its malice, but on account of the dangers to which it exposes those who are deliberately guilty of it.

These dangers are very grave, as you will acknowledge when you have carefully considered that which I will now lay before you. Every one that has had many years' experience of college life, and that can look back upon several generations of boys, will be able to tell you some sad stories about the men who, as boys, once occupied the seats upon which you are now sitting, and who once lived the life which you are now living. Not all who come to College turn out well. We could tell of some who have spent their patrimony in riotous living ; of others who are now drunkards ; of others who have known the inside of a prison ; of others who have lost their faith. We will not go on with the list ; but it might easily be amplified still more. Now, these men were once what you are. For becoming virtuous men, they had all the opportunities that you possess. They were virtuous for some time, for no one becomes evil all of a sudden. Gradual, though easy, is the descent from virtue to vice. Those who have followed that descent, and watched them with a sad and bleeding heart, could now point out its various steps. In all, it was the result of venial sin. The future prodigal was once

the dashing, careless, extravagant favourite of the School, a boy who never denied himself anything that could gratify his palate, and importuned his indulgent parents for the means of gratifying himself. The shattered drunkard began his downward career by procuring, even in his school days, the drink which the statutes of his College strictly forbade him to introduce within its walls. The felon was dishonest, and pilfered small articles from the desks and the rooms of his comrades. The infidel, even as a boy, took pleasure in displaying his superior abilities, by calling in question the teaching of the Church, and by endeavouring to throw ridicule upon her ordinances : "No one becomes all of a sudden wicked". It is by the contempt of small faults that men fall by little and little, almost imperceptibly, into those which are greater. At first it is perhaps the omission of a duty ; then the commission of some slight breach of discipline ; then the frequent transgression of the same, till at last a grave fault is, as it were, almost unconsciously slipped into, a fault ending eventually in disorders which merit both the contempt of men and the wrath of God.

Familiar to our minds is the saying of Ecclesiasticus : "Of one spark cometh a great fire".¹ Small indeed, and insignificant is that glittering point of fire ; but from it vast forests are sometimes laid in ashes, fruitful plains made desolate, and populous cities converted into howling wildernesses. Trivial, hardly worthy of notice, is that small puncture through which the water is trickling into the hold of that magnificent vessel which cleaves through the ocean waves. Yet in time it will succeed in burying that proud vessel beneath the engulfing waters. See that young man in the pride of his youth and beauty. He seems a very tower of strength which will resist the inroads of time, and stand erect for many a long year to come. He laughs at precaution, and deems it worthy only of the old, the feeble, and of silly women. But a slight cold settles upon his lungs. He despises it. He cares not for it. Lo ! in a few weeks, or, it may be, in a few months, his strength

¹ Chap. xi. 34.

has fled ; he is bowed down as if with the weight of years, and he sinks at last into the grave.

So is it with those who neglect small things ; they fall by little and little. They do not curb their anger ; they do not stifle jealousy ; they give way to resentment ; they indulge in slight revenge. These apparently contemptible defects have ended sometimes in the crime of murder. They are greedy of gain ; they love money ; they take what is not their own. Did not these small faults end, in the case of Judas, in the betrayal of the Lord ? When you examine the matter, there is nothing at which to be astonished. For, by continually offending in small things Our good God, His divine grace is prevented from flowing in upon the soul ; the ardour of His love for the offender is diminished ; His particular providence, His care of him is lessened ; the eye of conscience is blurred, and it cannot distinguish the line which separates venial from deadly sin ; the will is habituated to transgress. Then a temptation, strong, masterful, impetuous, rushes in upon him, and he goes down before it with a crash, like a tower that has been undermined.

Therefore, have a dread of venial sins. The dread of them is as necessary, nay, it is even more necessary than the dread of mortal sin. This latter, by the very hideousness of its nature, repels us ; but venial sin by its seeming harmlessness, inspires no fear. Look upon it not only with dread, but with horror ; for it is an evil thing—an offence against Our good Father, a disdain of Him, a contempt for His authority. Remember the severity with which He punishes it. But, above all things, never let the dangers to which it exposes you fade from your mind. In venial sin, behold the first step towards the abyss ; the first spark of the conflagration which will consume you ; the small puncture which will engulf the vessel of your soul. Then you will avoid it, and by avoiding it you will daily advance in virtue, till you reach at last that perfection possible in this world—a perfection which God will crown, and make absolute, in His heavenly kingdom.

VENIAL SIN.

II.

OFFENCES against God are generally divided into two great classes—those which destroy the life of the soul by depriving it of divine grace ; and those which only either diminish the influx of grace or dim its lustre, without, however, robbing the soul of its presence. The first are called mortal or deadly sins ; the second are called venial sins. Let us hope that, with the help of God, we may ever keep our hearts free from the poison of mortal sin. The dread of its fearful consequences is enough to inspire us with so salutary a fear as to keep us at a distance from it. It is not so with venial sin. This is unfortunately regarded by most boys as so small, so slight, so insignificant a matter, that they commit it without scruple, and excuse themselves whenever a qualm of conscience comes to disturb their peace, by saying : “ It is only a venial sin ”. This disposition of mind with respect to this evil usually leads to most disastrous results, as we hope to make clear to you ; for it offends God, and conducts by a gradual descent into the abyss of hell.

Venial sin is a transgression, in some slight matter, of the law of God. It is a setting aside of His will, and in its place substituting our own. He orders us to do something, and we refuse ; He forbids us to perform certain acts, and we set at naught His commands. These acts or these omissions are offensive to God. They irritate Him, provoke His displeasure, and cool His love for us. Therefore, they must be huge evils, and in themselves they are neither slight nor light, but are so called only when compared with the monstrous evil of mortal sin. An unmistakable proof of this, is the aversion and the hatred which God manifests in His treatment of those who, in the opinion of scriptural commentators and of learned theologians, were guilty of only these minor, venial offences. For looking back with curiosity upon the flaming Cities of the Plain, Lot’s wife was instantaneously struck dead, and her body changed into a pillar of salt, that future genera-



tions might, from her misfortune, learn wisdom. David, for a slight sin of vanity in numbering his people, was chastised by the hand of God, Who sent among them a pestilence which in three days carried off no fewer than 70,000. Moses was debarred from ever setting foot upon the Promised Land, because he had manifested some slight want of confidence in the providence of God. At the rebuke of St. Peter, Ananias and Saphira fell dead at his feet, because they had told an untruth respecting the amount of money which they had obtained by the sale of their property, of which they had disposed in favour of the poor.¹

These punishments are severe. They are inflicted by a most merciful and just God. Therefore, they are not excessive, not beyond that which the evil deserves, against which they are aimed. Ought not this fact to inspire us with a shuddering horror of all so-called slight, insignificant transgressions, and make us carefully abstain from the commission of them, under the wretched pretext of their being "only venial sins"? It will assuredly accomplish this, if we furthermore consider how easily these slight offences lead men to the gates of hell.

As a small spark shooting from the fire may cause a mighty conflagration; as a slight wound may occasion death; as an almost imperceptible leak may sink the largest and finest vessel that ever sailed the ocean waves; so also unless checked, unless carefully guarded against, venial sin may lead to the commission of crimes which will be punished in the everlasting flames of hell. Look at the great prophet king seated on his throne, once the friend of God, the ruler of His people, the noble ancestor of the future Messias. A holy man enters the presence chamber; he speaks to him; the king's eyes flash forth the fire of indignation against a culprit of whom the Prophet comes to complain. But suddenly changing his tone, the Prophet—for he is one—says: "*Thou art the man!*" The king falls upon his knees. He is a murderer! How has he come thus to stain his soul with the crimson dye of blood?

¹ Some writers think that this lie was a venial sin.

The first step was an unguarded look ; then an evil thought not banished ; then a desire consented to and accomplished. To hide his shame, he exposed a brave soldier to the swords of Israel's enemies and caused him to perish.

Come now in spirit to another scene. A battle has been raging all day upon the heights of Gelboe. There, wearied with fighting and weak with loss of blood, stands Israel's king, the great Saul. Despair is in his heart. His enemies are upon him. Sooner than fall into their hands, he rashly takes his own life. How has he come to this? By little and little. The first step was an act of impatience, leading to disobedience. Once upon the downward course, his pace was rapid, ever increasing in velocity, till having gone through all the grades of evil, he came at last to the suicide's lamentable death.

What is this that we now contemplate in the hall of the High Priest? Ages have passed away. The Messias has come. He has run His course, and He is now in the hands of His enemies. One of His followers, the chief of them, is there in the hall by the fire. A servant-maid comes to him, and accuses him of being a follower of the prisoner Whom the priests have declared worthy of death. He denies all knowledge of, all connection with Him. How has he come to this depth of baseness? It has been through an overweening estimate of his own strength, small at first, but increasing till it has at last launched him into this abyss.

We pass out into the night ; we assist on the following day at the trial of the God-man. We see Him scourged, crowned with thorns, and at last dying on the ignominious Cross. The night again falls over that dread scene of human wickedness and of divine love. What is this that makes us start with horror as we pass through one of the olive yards outside the city? From the branch of one of those great gnarled trees a man is hanging. He is dead. Death has been his own act. Despair has driven him to this desperate deed. Who was he? He was one of the chosen twelve, selected to be an Apostle by Him Whose cold, lifeless form lies now so still in the sepulchre. He was to have been one of the pillars of the Church which

Christ came on earth to establish. He was endowed, as the other Apostles were, with all those gifts which would have made him a Saint. Into him the Saviour had breathed the Holy Spirit of God. He had the power to work miracles ; to bind and to loose ; to found future Churches ; and to be the leader of the nations unto God. What has brought him to this pass? Only a few venial sins! He was the purse-bearer of Christ's little community. He allowed a love of money to creep into his heart. He began, at first, to appropriate a few paltry coins, then more and more, till, at last, as the Gospel styles him, he merited the name "robber". The greed of gold took so firm a hold of him, that he sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. No doubt, like others, he looked upon his first transgressions as small, insignificant faults. He thought nothing of them. They lured him along the road which has ended in this depth of guilt: "He that neglecteth small things, shall fall by little and little".

If you do not believe this, examine into and see what has happened to yourself, or to those with whose histories you are acquainted. How is it that that young man has perjured himself in open court, and that he has been committed to prison? He began by being untruthful at School. How is it that another has been thrust from his employment of trust, and has been branded with the dreadful name "thief"? He began by petty pilfering at School. How is it that another is now a confirmed and hopeless drunkard? He was not temperate in his early youth. How is it that another has disgraced his family, and brought ruin and shame into the houses of those who have trusted him? As a boy he did not guard his eyes ; he was loose in his conversation ; he did not observe the laws of modesty ; "he fell by little and little," till he came into the abyss of sin.

If you will take the trouble, you will see how these little things lead to great faults. In the beginning, a boy is careless in his prayers ; he takes no pains to prepare for them ; he makes little account of distractions. Next, his religious duties begin to suffer. He is careless at confession ; he prepares ill for communion ; he is glad when the time allotted

for thanksgiving—now to him become a wearisome burden—is over. This lukewarmness in God's service leads to a withdrawal of grace. Without a plentiful supply of that supernatural aid, duties begin to be very heavy, and they are one by one neglected. He becomes habituated to faults, to sins. He grows hard and callous to the voice of conscience, till at last a strong temptation, like a furious storm of wind, catches him, and he goes down under it, as a tree does, the roots of which have rotted away. Oh! if we could look into the prison of hell, we should see there many, in fact all who are there, who began their first downward step by a very small, insignificant fault.

Therefore, guard against and detest these insidious, these apparently despicable enemies of your salvation. Banish your distractions at prayer. Be severe with yourself, if you detect yourself in any untruthfulness. Let modesty enfold you as with a garment of honour, and beware of too great familiarity with your friends. To the best of your power, faithfully accomplish all your small duties. If you endeavour to follow these counsels of wisdom, you will be faithful also in those things that are of greater moment. Resist the beginnings of evil, and the utter annihilation of evil in your heart will be a matter of no great difficulty. Set your foot upon the spark, and you will not be devoured by the conflagration.

THE SIN OF IMPURITY.

ALL sin is hateful to God, but, with the exception of obdurate pride, none is more hateful than the sin of impurity. If we look for the record of that hate, we find it written upon the broad page of the world's history, and written in letters so large that he who runs may read. Only a few centuries after man's expulsion from Eden, the human race had so far corrupted its way, that God brought upon the earth the waters of the great flood to wash out the stain of its iniquities. As time went on, the memory of this great catastrophe grew dim in men's minds. Again they plunged into the mire of this dreadful vice, and again another deluge from heaven

was rained down upon the worst offenders ; but this time it was a deluge of fire. During the lapse of ages, over and over again has the hand of God been uplifted to scourge those who dishonoured Him by this detestable sin. Sometimes it was individuals that were singled out for special vengeance ; sometimes it was whole nations that were visited by His anger. Everywhere and always the wrath of God has flashed out against it ; and everywhere and always the punishment inflicted has marked, in a most startling way, the utter abhorrence of the Almighty for this infamous vice.

Do you ask the reason why ? Let us together study that reason, that it may fill our hearts with some of the horror with which impurity inspires the mind of God.

Two very simple questions will give us the lines upon which our inquiry must run. Who am I ? Who is God ? In answering the first of these questions, you may look at yourself from two different points of view ; you may regard yourself inasmuch as you have a soul, and then inasmuch as that soul is imprisoned, so to speak, in your body. As to your soul, you are the image of the living God, for when creating man He said, " Let us make man to Our own image and likeness," and this similitude to God is to be found chiefly in the soul. Therefore, you are the son of God, and as befits your noble descent, you are made only a little less than the Angels ; you are crowned with glory and honour ; and all other inferior things of the earth are set under your feet, to be your servants and to minister to your wants.

But the Eternal Word by Whom all things were made, did not disdain Himself to assume our human nature, and by so doing, to make Himself our brother. Consequently, besides having the glory of being a son of God, you have the proud distinction, not conferred upon the Angels, the first-born of His creation, of being, if we may use the expression, a blood relation of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. As if these honours were not enough to manifest to us His love, the Spirit of God unites Himself to our spirit, and takes it to Himself as His beloved spouse. From this triple relation to

the divine nature, judge what must be the horror with which God regards the vice of impurity.

By committing that heinous sin, the image of God is dragged through the mire. To insult in this way the brazen or the marble effigies of an earthly monarch, has been regarded as an act of treason so gross that men have lost their lives for being guilty of it, and history records how Theodosius savagely massacred the inhabitants of Thessalonica for dishonouring, in their rage against himself, the inanimate figure of his imperial majesty. With what severity then will God punish those who besmirch with the foul mire of impurity that glorious, living image of Himself impressed upon the immortal soul? Is it to be wondered at that the majesty of God thus so vilely profaned, should hold it in such utter abomination? But that is not all, Jesus Christ, our brother according to the flesh, is dishonoured by it. With what indignation, with what grief almost too deep for tears, does a noble family feel the stain left upon it by the ignoble action of one of its members? Will Jesus Christ feel less keenly the blot left upon His spotless robe? He, also, as well as the Eternal Father, turns away from impurity with a loathing of which we can have but a very inadequate conception. What shall we say of the detestation with which it is regarded by the Holy Spirit? The soul is His spouse, most closely, most intimately united with Him. Its honour is as dear to Him, as the apple of our eye is precious to us. Its beauty is as ravishingly pleasing to Him, as the light of life is sweet to us. Its fair fame is as jealously guarded by Him, as our own repute among men is defended by us. With what abhorrence then must He regard that vice which insults and dishonours His spouse; which mars her entrancing beauty; which tramples under foot the good name which He purchased for her with the blood of the world's Redeemer? Are not these reasons amply sufficient to explain to us the abomination in which impurity is held by God, and the apparently merciless severity with which He visits those who give themselves up to it? If they are not, then let us look at it from another standpoint. We have seen the indignities which it heaps upon God by

defiling the soul let us look at the indignities which it heaps upon Him by defiling the body.

Our body is the casket in which the jewel of our soul is preserved. Though not so precious as the jewel which it holds, it is nevertheless so precious as to be held in high esteem by God. He will suffer it to decay ; but it will be only for a time. He will once again lay His creative hand upon it, and clothe it with immortality. Together with the jewel which it contains, it was sanctified by holy Baptism, and dedicated as a sacred temple into which God vouchsafed to enter and in it to take up His abode. Therefore, St. Paul, when urging the Corinthians to ward off from themselves all defilement of impurity, says to them : " Know ye not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? " ¹

The temple of God ! How sacred, even to worldly minded men, is any place however humble that is thus set apart for the worship of God ! They uncover their heads when they enter it, in order to show their respect. They refrain from speaking, or if they speak, it is in a low tone of voice. They carefully abstain from any act that would be wanting in reverence. They look upon the violation of it, as a crime of the deepest dye, as a sacrilege, an insult offered to the majesty of God, Who dwells there. They punish it with the utmost severity. God entertains for the places of His abode sentiments of the utmost respect and esteem. He commands them to be held sacred. He punishes with the most rigorous severity any disrespect shown to them. What then will be His wrath against those who profane, in the most shocking manner, that living temple which His presence has consecrated ? It will be so great that He will destroy them : " If any man," says St. Paul, " violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy ". ²

If for irreverently looking at the Ark of the Covenant, He slew 70,000 Bethsamites ; if for stretching forth his hand to support it, He struck dead the ill-fated Osa ; if

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 16.

² *Ibid.*, 17.

for offering before it unhallowed incense, fire flashed out from the presence of the Lord and consumed Core, Dathan, and Abiron, what may those expect who grossly profane, not the material temple, but the living vessels consecrated to the service of the Lord? The temple is sacred, but the altar that is in it, is more sacred still. The altar is sacred, but the vessels that are on it, for the use of the Holy Sacrifice, are more sacred still. See with what reverence they are kept. When not actually in use, they are covered with a veil. No one but a priest is allowed to touch them. Now your body is a sacred vessel, consecrated to God. Jesus Christ has set it apart for Himself. The Holy Spirit has poured His unction upon it. God Himself has entered and dwelt in it. What a crime, then, it must be to violate that sacred vessel, that hallowed shrine, that dread sanctuary in which the great God has deigned to dwell! How we shudder when we either hear or read of wicked men breaking open the tabernacle, scattering the Sacred Hosts upon the pavement of the church, and turning to vile uses the vessels in which they were preserved! Is not the profanation of the body in which Christ dwells just as horrible? Do not men, when they commit the sin of impurity, treat it with as great indignity? What an irreverence to Jesus Christ! What a horrible profanation! It is like unto that which He suffered during the night which preceded His Passion, when the priests abandoned Him to the jeers, the mockeries, and the insults of their lewd servants and the brutal soldiers. They covered His eyes with a filthy rag; they spat in His face; they struck Him; they bent the knee in cruel mockery before Him.

Because, then, the sin of impurity defaces the image of God impressed upon the soul, dishonours Jesus Christ, and insults the spouse of the Holy Ghost; because, also, it violates, defiles, and profanes the living temple of the living God, it is held in the utmost abhorrence by God, and is by Him punished with terrible severity. So great and so vile an evil ought to fill your heart with the deepest loathing. Pray to God to fill it with these sentiments. Humble yourself in the

dust when you feel the tendency of fallen nature to this disgraceful sin. Resist with all your might the base inclinations of your flesh. Hate them, and ask God daily to fill you with a more intense hatred for them. Oppose them with invincible firmness ; and if in the past they have overpowered you, and rushing in have defiled the temple of God, weep over your sad fault ; beg pardon for the crime committed, and resolve, with God's help, never again to admit His enemies and yours into the sanctuary which He has consecrated for His abode.

IMPURE THOUGHTS.

IMPURITY is so filthy a monster that to look at, or to think of, or to desire it, is a grave sin, if the look, or the thought, or the desire is wilful and deliberate. Worse than the pitch spoken of in the proverb, it defiles us even before we actually touch it. Yet before this unclean idol, men fall down in adoration, and to it sacrifice their health, their youth, their beauty, their eternity, and their God. It has over them so great power, that even against their will, its horrible image floats before their imaginations, and thoughts of it glide unbidden into their minds. Even its unwelcome presence in that sanctuary, or rather the phantom of its presence, seems to carry with it defilement ; for many are grievously troubled when they become aware that its shadow has fallen across their mental vision. Because these images or these thoughts have been in the mind, they fear that they have sinned, and their soul is consequently in a state of anxiety and trouble pitiable to contemplate. Therefore, it will be advantageous for you clearly to understand when these thoughts and these imaginations are sins ; and to learn by what means you may prevent their presence from doing you any harm.

Every human act owes its birth to some thought. At first an image is flashed into the imagination. The presence of that image there causes either pleasure or aversion, even before the advertence of the intelligence to its existence. Then the intelligence becomes aware of its presence, and the will either accepts the thought, or rejects it. The acceptance, or the

rejection of the thought thus generated in the mind, is called an act. But that act is attributable to us either for merit or for demerit, only when in it there is the concurrence of the advertence of the intelligence, and the consent of the will. Therefore, always bear in mind that sin does not consist in the mere fact of an evil thought, or of an evil image coming into the mind ; nor in any involuntary pleasure, or unwished-for emotion which it may produce in the mind or in the body ; nor even in the external act itself, when there is no advertence, and consequently no consent. Sin is committed, as we have said, only when these two intellectual acts are combined, and its gravity depends upon the amount of advertence, and the fulness of consent.

From this, you can easily see how erroneous is the opinion of those who, on perceiving that some evil thought has flitted across their minds, or some odious impression has been made upon their bodily senses, conclude that they have been unfaithful to God, and that all is lost. On the contrary, no harm whatever has been done. They have kept their faith ; they have not been driven from their position. For the thought had flashed through their mind, the impression had been made, before they became aware of it, and their distress that anything of the kind had occurred, is a manifest proof that the will did not give any consent. You will also understand how equally erroneous is the idea of those who regard as mere trifles any thoughts or any imaginations which have not been followed by an external act. For that which constitutes the malice of sin, is the internal act of the will assenting to evil ; the outward act does not add anything to the essential malice. Nevertheless, if you should, unfortunately, commit the outward act, that fact must be mentioned in confession, because of the duration and the intensity of the evil, the damage which it may inflict upon others, and the scandal which it may put in their path. Hence, any one who on being tempted by the devil adverts to the evil, and says internally : " I will do that which has been suggested to me," in that very instant incurs the guilt of the sin which he afterwards consummates by act. If the matter of the sin to which

he assents be light, then his offence will be only venial ; if it be grave, his offence will be grave.

If, when these thoughts and these filthy imaginings are perceived by him, he at once begins to struggle against them, and endeavours to eject them from his mind, he is not guilty of any sin. Instead of sinning, he is performing a most meritorious act of virtue. He is proving himself a brave soldier of Jesus Christ. He is facing his enemies, and though the smoke and the dust of the conflict may hang about him, obscure his vision, and fill him with discomfort ; though the ferocity and the filthiness of his opponents may cause him disgust and horror, yet not one particle of that dust, not even the odour of that infernal smoke will hang about his garments. He will come forth pure, spotless, scatheless.

Now, although we hope that with the aid of God's grace you will always be victorious in these conflicts, yet you must never take the offensive, and seek your enemies in order to rout them. The foe with whom you contend when you struggle against impurity, is so subtle, so powerful, so fascinating, that the most effective way to defeat him is to flee from him. "In this conflict," it has been truly said, "only cowards are victors." Therefore, you must never seek for evil thoughts in order to overcome them. They will present themselves without your seeking. When they do so, you must not remain passive and simply endure them. If you do, you will be seized upon and destroyed. But though some of these thoughts are inevitable, yet you may prevent many of them. Others you cannot prevent. These you must fight, and how you may most easily secure for yourself the victory, we will now tell you.

First, you must be armed against them. Your breastplate must be a firm trust in God ; your shield, vigilance ; and your sword, prayer. Of trust in God, we need only say, that all your strength and courage come from Him ; of vigilance, that a soldier who sleeps at his post, is very often found there stark dead ; of prayer, that you must learn to use it always, you must persevere in it, till it becomes as easy for you to pray as it is to breathe. At the first approach of the enemy, your cry

must mount up to God; also remember to pray earnestly to the Virgin of virgins, the spotless Mother of God. She will intercede for you; and the very thought of her will banish all filthy images which the devil paints before your imagination, just as the glorious sun scatters the darkness when he lifts his head and looks upon the world.

One of the snares which the devil lays to catch boys and entangle them in the meshes of impurity, is the habit of day-dreaming, of building castles in the air, and of dwelling in them. Many boys are given to this foolish practice, and instead of employing their time in working at their lessons which are the foundations of real and not of airy castles, waste it in this silly way. This is nothing else than sheer idleness. Now idleness is the mother of mischief. If you will not work, the devil will soon find occupation for you. That occupation is to do his filthy work, till you become his bond-slave, and execute his behests even though you all the while loathe yourself for doing them. Therefore, carefully avoid day-dreaming, and you may hope, with the aid of prayer, to keep the devil at a distance.

Another of his snares against which you must guard, is indiscriminate reading of whatever comes in your way. There is a certain class of books which will fill your imagination with all kinds of obscene images. Do not read these. Check your curiosity to know that of which they treat, and you will shut off from yourself a whole host of enemies.

Lastly, one of the best means of securing victory, is to follow St. Paul's advice, never to let any temptations *lay hold of you*, except such as are merely trials from men, as, for example, of your temper, or of your patience. With all others, keep them at arm's length. When they come to the door of your heart, do not open it to them; do not stand talking to them; do not dally with them; do not let them get their foot inside. Keep the door shut; do not look out at them; hold no parley with them. Then you are safe. But if you let them get their foot inside, they will presently push you back, take possession of your house, cruelly murder you, and rifle you of all your treasure.

However, in your struggle with your spiritual foes, be calm. Do not, as some do, endeavour to repel these enemies by violence ; by agitating themselves ; by speaking out aloud ; and by external motions of their bodies ; these methods expose them to ridicule, and often only increase the violence of the conflict which they have to sustain. It is best to be quiet ; to divert the attention to something else ; and if possible to despise the evil suggestion.

If you endeavour to follow these few counsels, the wisdom of which has been tested by the practice of holy men, you will certainly come out of the combat victorious. Pay no attention to the uneasy feeling which often remains behind, even when the victory is on your side. All is right. You have not failed. Your action has given glory to your Lord and Master. Your contest with evil has proved your soul and purged it of its dross. You are made by it more pure, more humble, more generous in your devotion to God. Therefore, fear not your enemies. Prepare your soul for further battle, and for more glorious victories. Trust in God ; be prayerful ; be watchful ; be distrustful of yourself ; and God will always be at your side to make the temptations which you endure of such a nature, that you will be able to bear them, and to triumph gloriously over them.

IMPURE WORDS.

“ OUT of the abundance of the heart,” says Our blessed Lord, “ the mouth speaketh.” For as from a well there issues forth water, and as from a furnace there fly forth sparks, so from the mouth of man there will come forth whatever of virtue or of vice there is in him. From the good treasure that is in the bosom of a good man, there will pour out good things ; but from the sink of vice that is in the bosom of a wicked man, there will pour out evil things.¹ This is specially true of those whose hearts are corrupted by the disease of impurity. They cannot keep their dismal infamy to themselves. It

¹ St. Matt. xii. 34, 35.

will out almost in spite of themselves. It manifests itself in filthy, odious words, just as fire proclaims its presence by the smoke which ascends from it. For the reception of these words, they eagerly seek out hearers ; and if these cannot be found, they will speak to the eyes of the passers-by by writing their infamous thoughts on the walls of our public thoroughfares. This hateful form of this detestable vice, is sometimes introduced within the sanctuary of our Schools, by those who are corrupt. Outside their walls, it is, alas ! a means of propagating evil, too common to cause any surprise. To guard you against falling into these nets, and to prevent you from ever being guilty of the crime of laying them to entangle the feet of others, let me put before you two thoughts : first, any one who is guilty of uttering impure words, is an apostle of evil ; secondly, by so doing, he is a murderer of souls.

Do you ask me how this can be ? Let us examine the matter, and endeavour to see. You know that the purpose for which Our Lord came into the world was to save the souls of men. He atoned for the primal transgressions and for all the sins which men would commit, by offering Himself a victim on the Cross. But how were they to be brought to a knowledge of Him, and of the priceless boon which at so great a cost He had purchased for them ? How were they to be led to the fountain which He had opened for them, to that fountain of His precious blood, in which they were to wash away all their iniquities ? It was, as St. Paul expresses it, " by the foolishness of preaching ". He first gathered round Himself a few simple, unlettered men. These He Himself instructed. He gave to them a " word " to scatter like seed among men. His final injunction was : " Preach the word to every living creature ". They complied with His order, and like industrious husbandmen, they flung it broadcast upon the minds of men. It fell into those minds. It bore fruit ; and that fruit is the Church of Christ which fills the world. Through the ministry of that Church, and through the might of that " word," the souls of men are gathered into God's garners, and saved for life everlasting.

Now, as God desires to save men, so the devil, the arch-enemy of the human race, is bent upon working their eternal ruin. He, therefore, in a certain sense, imitates the method employed by God. He does not give up his life for them, but he has a poison to scatter among them, a poison which will slay its millions. This also is a "word". He gathers under his standard all who are themselves corrupt, and to them commits the task of disseminating that word. His injunction to them is to spread it: "Preach that word to every living creature". Obedient to his command, forth they go with all the zeal of missionaries, carrying a message which seems to burn them, so eager are they to deliver, but not to be rid of it. With a zeal worthy of a better cause, they always and everywhere labour in their vocation. You will find them on the benches of the School, in the cloisters of the College, in the office of the merchant, in the workshop of the artisan, amid the bustle of great cities, and in the solitude of the country. Wheresoever one of them can effect an entrance, he speedily finds a disciple; then another and another, till at last there is quite a circle banded together to do this diabolical work. As in the days of Solomon, so is it now also; sinners unite in an unholy confederacy to spread the infection which has carried death into their own hearts. "Come," say they to one another, "let us lie in wait for blood, let us hide snares for the innocent, without cause; let us swallow him up alive like hell, and whole, as one that goeth down into the pit."¹ Their snare is the "word" entrusted to them. They breathe it upon the air, and like a subtle poison, it insinuates itself into the minds of those whom they purpose to destroy. There it works its deadly effects. That child of God, so bright, so beautiful in His eyes, so dearly beloved by Him, pines and dies. His body is living, but his soul is dead. The temple of God has been violated, and its treasure stolen away. The apostles of the devil have gained one other soul. They have obeyed their master's mandate, and preached his word. Look at the result! Oh! how art thou fallen from thy

¹ Prov. i. 11, 12.

high estate, poor, wretched, erring child! Bestir thyself; rouse thyself from the stupor which their poison has brought upon thee, or thou wilt sleep a sleep out of which there will be no awaking.

The devil's corrupt slaves who thus vomit forth their impure words into the ears of the young and innocent, by so doing are the apostles of evil. When their words produce their deadly effect, they are murderers of souls. What is that effect? It is to deprive the soul of grace; and divine grace, as we know, is the life of the soul. Therefore, to take away the life of the soul, is to be in the eyes of God a murderer. We fear those who threaten our bodily life; we ought much more to fear those who aim at the life of the soul. Jesus Christ tells us not to be afraid of those who kill the body, but to be in dread of those who kill the soul. Consequently, their sin must be of a more heinous nature. Do those who so gaily pour forth their stream of obscene words ever reflect upon this, and upon the light in which they themselves are regarded by God? If they do, and then continue in their wicked ways, they must be bold indeed. If you utter foul, impure words, and by those words another is drawn into sin, you are a murderer. Keep that fact well before your mind. It is good to call things by their proper names; by so doing, we sometimes have startling truths flashed into our minds. That is the truth about the filthy speaker. He is a murderer! Let him look upon the work which he has done.

This morning, let us say, one of his companions began the day, as for years he began it, the child of God. On his soul there was impressed the image of His great Creator. His intelligence turned instinctively to the Source whence he sprang. His heart was full of love for that all-holy Being towards Whom its every beat was directed. The beauty of holiness sparkled in his features like the glory which of old shone round the Ark of the Covenant. Nay, God Himself had His abode in that shrine of flesh; for "His delights are to be with the children of men". All was peaceful, calm, serene within that little kingdom. Obedient to God, loving Him with all its strength, hoping and trusting in Him, it

sought nothing but to be dissolved, that it might be with Him for ever.

The afternoon comes. It is a time of recreation, and the boy strays into the company from which he ought studiously to have kept away. At first there are a few ambiguous words. Then there are others plainer, more direct, more to the point. The knowledge of evil is fascinating, as fascinating as the lighted candle is to the moth. The evil becomes clear; but even so it is fascinating, and the soul flies into it, only to fall scorched and ruined. The image of God is effaced. The love of Him has vanished. The desire of Him is changed into a thirst for that which is not God. A raging fever is in the blood, a tumult in the heart. Peace has fled. Calmness and serenity have gone. The boy has ceased to be God's child, and he is now a child of hell. "See, he has become like unto us, knowing both good and evil."

Where shall we find an image which will give to us an idea of the disaster which has befallen him? Look for it in the fever-stricken patient as he lies wearily tossing upon his uneasy couch. The light has left his eye; the hue of health has faded from his cheek; the vigour of manhood has gone from his arm. Feeble as a child he lies there, his brain on fire, full of disturbing phantoms; his heart throbbing with distressing rapidity; his mind wandering; his whole frame wasting away. Look at that many-steepled city, bathed in the glorious sunlight, with its marble villas, its shady parks, its vast palaces, its long line of stately streets teeming with an ever-shifting, busy population. The clouds of war gather over it. The storm bursts upon it. Its enemies compass it about on every side. Their engines of destruction vomit into it a hail of iron and of fire. The flames ascend to heaven and fill the midnight sky with their lurid glare. At last the breach is made, and its foes rush in upon it. There is a scene of horror from which we turn away our eyes. The days pass by, and all is quiet again. But on what a scene does the noonday sun look down! Where are that city's glorious mansions, its proud stately buildings, its green parks, its broad thoroughfares, and the busy crowds which used to people them and

fill them with the hum of peaceful commerce? All these are gone! There are heaps of smoking ruins; there is a blackened landscape; there is silence; there is desolation. Here are images of the havoc wrought in the human soul by the poison of these filthy words. This is a sight over which the Angels weep; which causes God to veil round His glory in clouds and darkness, whence the thunders mutter dire sounds of swiftly advancing vengeance.

These few considerations will determine you never to utter any words which will make you an apostle of evil and a murderer of souls. Flee from those who speak them. If you cannot avoid their company, then have the manliness not to yield to their insidious designs. Do not smile at their speech. Never join in the hideous, demoniacal laugh which greets their filthy outpourings. Sternly rebuke them; and if you cannot do so, flee away, as Lot did from Sodom, lest you be involved in the deluge of fire which will overwhelm them.

THE EFFECTS OF IMPURITY UPON THE SOUL.

FREQUENT repetition of the same act, or of a series of acts, sets upon a man a certain stamp which is visible to even the least observant. It is as unmistakable as the impress left in soft wax by the clear, sharp lines, of a well-cut seal. In the upright bearing, the square-set frame, and the measured stride of the soldier, we see the result of his drill; in the rolling gait of the sailor, the effect of the unsteady footing upon which he has passed his days; in the pale face, the thoughtful expression, and the rounded shoulders of the student, the sedentary pursuits which have tied him down to his desk. A corresponding effect is produced upon the soul by the life which it has led. The discipline to which it has been subjected, or to which it has subjected itself, imprints upon it its own characteristic marks. It is but natural, therefore, to conclude that sin, and particularly the sin of impurity, will burn into the soul an exact counterpart of its own hideous features. Let us attentively examine these features, or,

dropping all metaphor, these effects, that the knowledge of them may fill us with even a greater horror of this vice than, perhaps, we feel at present.

In the limited space of a few pages, it would be idle to expect us to mention and describe them all ; we will, therefore, bring under your notice only a few, and those the most striking of these terrible effects. The first that catches our attention, and, perhaps, the most startling of them all, is the hatred of God which it never fails to generate in those upon whom it has set its iron fetters. For, no matter how much men may try to minimise the guilt of this particular offence by gilding it over with fair names, calling it an amiable weakness, an indiscretion, a flame of youth, they are well aware of the hatred with which God looks upon it, and of the awful chastisements inflicted upon its slaves, chastisements by which He has manifested to men that irreconcilable hate. In their eyes, consequently, God must ever appear as the stern avenger of all those nameless outrages which this vice causes them to commit against the dignity of human nature, and the awful holiness of God. At every fresh excess, the image of that offended majesty stands with wrathful brow before them. It is the one bitter drop in their cup of pleasure. It is the dark cloud spoiling the brightness of their brief day. It is the death's head at their banquet, grinning at their mirth, and suggesting to them the burning lake to come. The idea, therefore, of God is ever present to their minds, not as a being to be loved and worshipped and obeyed, but as a dread something to be feared and shunned. Consequently, they begin to dislike, to flee from, to blaspheme, and to hate Him.

To this hatred of God, and as a natural outcome of it, there succeeds, or rather there is ever present with it, an abandonment of all the duties which religion prescribes. This is only to be expected, for these duties are the service which we pay to Our sovereign Lord, and when the heart is full of hatred against Him, there cannot be any attraction in anything that concerns Him. There is even a positive loathing of it. Therefore, the impure man, or the impure boy, by a sort

of instinct, withdraws himself from these duties, just as one clothed in rags shuns the company of the elegantly attired, or as an ill-bred man, polished society, or as an unlettered man, the companionship of the learned. The very disparity between himself and them, in every possible light in which he can look at himself, drives him from all contact with them. So it is with one who hates God. How can he pray to Him Whom he regards as the dread avenger, the weight of Whose almighty arm he one day expects to feel? How can he listen to that efficacious "word" which tells him of chastity, of judgment, and of the wrath to come? What pleasure can he find in those touching ceremonies which recall to his mind the happy days of his innocence? Of what use is it for him to go to confession? If he goes, he is well aware that he must repent, and he will not do so; that he must give up his evil companions, and he will not abandon them; that he must firmly resolve never to sin again, and to promise this he feels would be only mocking God. He gives up confession; if he goes, he does not tell his sins; or if he declares them, it is without any real wish to give them up; and in either case his confession is worthless. He abandons the Holy Table, or if he goes, it is only to profane the body of the Lord.

Having given up the duties of religion, and thus forsaken the remedies which would heal his disorder, his heart soon becomes dead to everything that would convert it to God. It becomes hard as the "nether millstone". The grace of God falls upon it in vain; the terrors of His judgments sweep over it as the idle winds; the blows of His chastising hand strike out of it not a single spark of repentance or of love. The beauty of virtue makes no impression upon it; honour ceases to attract it; all delicacy of sentiment abandons it; the most touching examples find no responsive chord within it. It is hard; it is dead. It laughs at the threats of God. It fears not death; judgment has no terrors for it; hell no deterrent force; heaven no attractive power.

To what cause shall we assign this defiant boldness, this hardihood in the presence of the great truths which underlie our very existence? It is to another effect of this horrible

vice. The light of faith is dying out. In order to stifle the remorse which gnaws at his heart, in consequence of his transgression of the moral law, the impure sinner finds it to his interest that the great truths should turn out to be great falsehoods, chimeras created by the heated brain of enthusiasts and cowards. He accordingly begins to question them, to doubt them, and at last he persuades himself that he does not believe them. Oftentimes this is the reason why men become infidels. It is not that they have more brain power than other men ; it is not that religion presents to their cultured minds difficulties which contradict reason ; it is not that their investigations have convinced them of the unsoundness of the foundations upon which Christianity rests ; no, it is that their hearts are corrupt, are sick with the fever of lust. Let the heart be cured of its malady, and the intelligence will see plainly enough. It is not that they cannot, but that they will not see.

How does all this usually end? It ends in final impenitence which is the last effect of impurity. For the force of habit is so strong, and obtains over the wretched victims of this degrading vice so great a mastery, that from morning till night, from year's end to year's end, whether waking or sleeping, their thoughts and their imaginations are filled with it. They live in it. They live for it. They waste their vital powers ; they dull their intellectual powers. They feel that they are wrecking their bodily health ; they shudder as they perceive the decay of their intelligence ; but they will not tear from their bosom the viper that is destroying their life. They are cast at last upon the bed of death. We should think that now, at least, when the dread judgment is close at hand, and the gates of hell are within measurable distance, some feeling of dread, some sentiment of horror at their impending doom, would rouse them from their stupor and enable them to cast off the chains of their slavery. Nothing of the kind ! The slave of impurity has been known to be guilty of his vile sin, even when stretched upon his bed of death. Thus does it lead him to persevere in evil and to crown a wicked life with a still more wicked death.

Dying at enmity with God, covered with the leprosy of sin, he stands before the throne of God, under the full blaze of His awful sanctity. He looks at God ; he looks at himself, and self-condemned he is hurled into "the lake of fire, burning with brimstone". To his filthy pleasures there succeeds an eternity of torment, the worst element of which, after the loss of God, will be the ever-present reflection that his damnation has been his own act. To gratify his body, he has sacrificed his soul ; to taste a degrading pleasure, he has flung away eternal happiness.

These are only some of the effects of this detestable passion. Are they not enough to fill your heart with a great terror of it, with a great hatred of it, with an intense desire to keep your feet out of its toils ? A prayerful consideration of them, from time to time, will cause them to produce this excellent fruit in your soul. Whenever the devil comes to suggest his filthy ideas to your mind, quickly call back to your memory, what are the effects of this sin. That act will be a powerful aid in helping you to flee away from him. Of course, you will find it hard to resist ; but it is much harder to burn in hell. You will find it wearisome to be always denying the importunate cravings of your flesh ; but it is much more wearisome to be the devil's bond-slave, and to do his filthy work. Therefore, choose now to live in purity and holiness. You will live the friend of God. You will enjoy a calm, a peace, a happiness which sin can never give ; and you will be preparing for yourself a happy eternity with that all-holy God Whom you have served during the brief span of your mortal life.

THE MEASURE OF SINS.

To deter you from committing sin, many excellent motives are given both by spiritual writers and by preachers. In vivid colours they paint before your eyes its unutterable turpitude, its pernicious effects upon the soul, and the awful rigour with which it is punished by God. We will add yet another which has made the Saints shudder every time they reflected upon it ; it is that there is for each of us a measure of sins and a

measure of graces. When the measure of our sins has been filled up, the measure of our graces is exhausted, and then there is for us judgment without mercy.

By these words we would not have you understand either that God will not bestow any more grace, or that the wicked cannot repent, but only that, by continuing to offend, they become so perverse as not to have any *wish* to repent: "they perish, not because they *cannot* become good, but because they *will* not become good".¹ Not having the will to repent, they shut off from themselves the influx of divine grace, and dying in their sins they are said to "fill up the measure of their iniquities". Moreover, it is the teaching of the Church that those who after baptism fall into grievous sin can *always*, by true repentance, be restored to grace and favour.² Hence the doctrine of St. Augustine, the texts from Scripture, and the examples which we shall adduce to show you that there is a measure of grace, and that there is a measure of sin, are nothing more than a vigorous way of stating that, by perseverance in his evil courses, the sinner, as far as he is concerned, puts a limit to the grace of God and fills up the measure of his own iniquities.

With this explanation before our minds, let us examine the matter for ourselves.

In the Book of Wisdom, the inspired writer addressing God, says to Him: "Thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight".³ God has fixed the number of the stars, the number of the drops of water in the vast ocean, the number of the grains of sand upon the sea-shore. He has measured out the moments of each man's life, the pulsations of his heart, the breathings of his lungs. He has appointed the number of birds that shall fly through the air, of fishes that shall swim the paths of the sea, of flowers and plants and trees that shall spring from the earth and fill it with fruitfulness and verdure. Not a bud falls to the ground, not a living creature dies, not a flower or a leaf withers, without His

¹ III. Concil. Valentin., Can. 2.

² IV. Lateran., cap. "Firmiter". Concil. Trid., Sess. 6, cap. 14.

³ Wisd. xi. 21.

permission and without His knowledge. Jesus Christ says of ourselves, that the very hairs of our heads are numbered, and that not one of them falls without the knowledge and the will of Our heavenly Father. Now if this is true of these material things which are comparatively of little value, with how much greater reason is it true of those divine graces which have cost Our God the life blood of His only begotten Son? If it is true of these graces, it must be true of our sins also, for the measure of grace implies a measure of sin also; when the one is filled up, the other is exhausted. Hence, St. Augustine argues that the patience of the Lord, with respect to the sinner, endures until by his transgressions the sinner has come into the abyss of evil. Having advanced so far, he does not *will* to repent, and that unwillingness on his part causes the measure of his iniquities to overflow. Then God strikes him at once, by giving him over to a reprobate sense, or by depriving him of reason, or by taking away his breath of life.¹

Such is the conclusion arrived at by this enlightened theologian, this learned doctor of the Church. Let us see whether in the Holy Scripture there is any warrant for the deduction which he has made from the words of the Book of Wisdom.

In the Book of Exodus, we have presented to us the wonderful history of the deliverance from Egyptian bondage wrought by God for His chosen people. By the hand of Moses, He freed them from the tyrannical oppression of their brutal taskmasters, and led them through the desert towards the Promised Land. Though circled with a series of miraculous occurrences which plainly indicated to them that it was under the guidance of God Himself that they were journeying to that abode of peace and plenty, they seem to have been stone blind to His fatherly providence. Again and again they raised their voices in clamorous murmuring against His chosen servant; they distrusted God; they fell into idolatry, and in many other ways manifested the perverseness of their hearts and the obduracy of their wills. When actually within sight of that land which flowed with milk and honey, they

¹ *Vita Christi*, cap. 9.

once more rose up in revolt against their leader. This sin so exasperated their long-suffering God, that He summoned Moses into His presence, and had not that great servant of the Lord prevailed over Him by his prayer, the Almighty would have swept them by a pestilence from the face of the earth. With His wonted mercy He pardoned them. But not all. Only those that were born since the departure from Egypt, together with the two faithful spies, were ever suffered to set foot in the goodly land. Why was this? It was because "they had offended God *ten times*". Their *tenth* sin filled up the measure of their iniquities.

Far more rigorous was the justice with which God visited the cities of Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, and Edom. "For three crimes of Damascus, and for four I will not convert it. . . . For three crimes of Gaza, and for four I will not convert it. . . . For three crimes of Tyre, and for four I will not convert it. . . . For three crimes of Edom, and for four I will not convert him. . . ."¹ Why would not God show mercy to them after their *fourth* sin? It was because that sin filled up the measure of their iniquities. Does not the history of Pharaoh furnish us with another case in point—a case which bears out the conclusion of St. Augustine? After repeatedly experiencing the wrath of God for his obstinacy in refusing to let God's people go, that one last plague which filled every house in the land of Egypt with mourning, apparently broke down the stubbornness of his will, and yielding to the manifest desire of heaven, he hurriedly dismissed, nay, almost drove the Israelites from his dominions. But repenting of what he had done, he dared once more to offend the Lord. He pursued after the people of God, and undismayed by the evident signs which met his eyes at the Red Sea, proving to him that they were under the guidance and the protection of heaven, he dared to enter with his host into the dry passage made for the Israelites through the waters, and at once met with swift and terrible destruction. God had pardoned him *ten times*. His eleventh sin filled up the measure of his iniquities, and down upon him

¹ Amos i. 3, 6, 9, 11.

flashed the sword of the Lord. Therefore, say not : " I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me ? for the Most High is a patient rewarder. Be not without fear about sin forgiven, and add not sin upon sin." One day you may add unto the rest that which will cause your measure to overflow. " Then His wrath will come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee."¹

Now, although it is evident from the testimony of the Sacred Scripture that there is a measure of sin, yet that measure is not the same for all. For one, it is more, for another, it is less. One man is guilty of a thousand enormities, he repents, and he is saved ; another sins but three or four times, he is struck down, and in all probability is lost. Why is this ? We know not, " for God hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He willeth, He hardeneth ".² The Angels sinned but once, and they were straightway hurled headlong into hell. St. Gregory in the fourth book of his Dialogues speaks of a child who after its first sin, a sin of blasphemy, was seized suddenly with a mortal illness, and he died. Gerson tells us of a young schoolboy whom he knew personally, and who after his first sin died, and he was lost. It is with the number of our sins as with the number of our years. All live not an equal length of days. Consequently, the last grave sin that you committed may be the last that God will pardon. The one which you intend to commit, may set the seal upon your doom. Therefore, beware ; you are on the brink of the abyss ; another step may precipitate you into the depths below.

But you will ask : " Is not the mercy of God infinite ? " Yes it is. It is infinite in itself, but not in its external application. If it were infinite in this latter sense, then the sinner might go on in his wickedness, defying God, blaspheming His name and transgressing all His commands, and yet be saved without repenting of his sin. This is impossible. There must be a limit beyond which God will not extend His mercy, for He cannot without annihilating Himself allow man to be his own centre, his own God.

¹ Eccl. v. 4, 5, 9.

² Rom. ix. 18.

It follows, therefore, that if God has fixed the number of sins which He will pardon in the case of each of His rational creatures, if, in other words, there is a measure of sins, there must be also a measure of graces. This cannot be doubted. For if in other matters of far less moment He has done all things "in number, weight and measure," assuredly He has acted in like manner with these His most precious gifts and favours. He is, in Himself, infinitely merciful, but He does not infinitely manifest that mercy to us. Consequently, as we have before remarked, when the measure of sin is filled up, the measure of grace is exhausted. This conclusion is borne out by these words of Job : "Thou hast given life and mercy to me"¹. Commenting upon them St. Gregory bids us observe "how the life of man and the mercy of God go together". Now, it would argue in us a vast amount of folly, if we could persuade ourselves that we shall never die. Therefore, as we cannot promise ourselves an endless course of years, so we cannot expect an endless flow of graces. As then the days of our life are numbered, so also are the graces that we shall receive. When once our days have come to an end, there is no more mortal life for us, and when our measure of graces is exhausted, no others will flow into our souls. If you doubt this, ask yourself why St. Paul and his disciple Timothy were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach in Asia. The answer given by Venerable Bede is, that this prohibition was issued, because its people had rejected the grace of conversion. God, thereupon would not suffer His Apostles to cast before them the pearls of the Gospel teaching. They were sure not to receive them, and by not receiving them their wicked hearts would be more heavily burdened with guilt.

Therefore, when the devil tempts you to sin once more, and promises you that you will be able to repent, as you have perhaps oftentimes done before, bear in mind the awful truth which we have endeavoured to impress upon your mind. There is a measure of sin ; there is a measure of grace.

¹ Job x. 12.

Neither of these measures is equal for all. Your next sin may empty the measure of your graces, and fill up the measure of your iniquities. Therefore, stand in fear ; pray earnestly for the grace of perseverance ; and work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

THE HABIT OF SIN.

As we have already seen, God cannot suffer you always to go on offending Him. A time must come when His patience will be exhausted, and you will be called to account for that which you have done. The measure of His long suffering will be emptied, and the measure of your iniquities will be filled up. Your next sin may bring this to pass ! What a motive for strenuous efforts, for steady perseverance in the path of duty ! Let me suggest one other, which cannot but give additional weight to the reasons already adduced, for making you flee from sin as from the jaws of death itself. This is the fear, that by sinning you may contract an inveterate *habit* of offending God. That habit will expose you to a danger, the mere contemplation of which ought to make you shudder, and will involve you in difficulties from which it will be next to impossible for you to extricate yourself. Now, while you have time, calmly consider this danger, and weigh well these difficulties. The thought which you devote to them will, perhaps, aid you at once and for ever to break with sin.

The danger of which we speak, is that of making utterly useless for you all the means which God usually employs for saving the souls of men. These means are almost infinite both in number and in variety, but the chief among them are the voice of your own conscience, the marvellous efficacy of His Sacraments, and the omnipotence of prayer. Conscience is for each of us an internal, ever-present counsellor and monitor who speaks to us with the voice and with the authority of God. When we seek its advice, it invariably, unless perverted by sin, endeavours to square our actions with the eternal law of God. When we do not obey its dictates, it speaks out fearlessly and

reproves us for our deflection from truth and justice. It will give us no peace. No amount of false reasoning can throw dust in its eyes, and make it take our view of the question at issue between itself and us. No clamour on our part can drown its shrill tones of reproof. No force of expediency can make it assent to our wrong-doing. It laughs at the esteem which we have won from wicked men ; it dissents from the applause with which they greet our actions ; with its shrill cry of censure, it breaks in upon our pleasures ; with its sentence of condemnation, it disturbs our repose. There is no more powerful ally to aid us in winning our crown than this monitor stationed by God at the door of our souls, to guard them against the entrance of evil.

Then, there are the Sacraments,—those sources of grace opened for us by the divine bounty, sources from which we draw life-giving waters, furnishing us with a remedy for all our ills. From one of them, we derive our spiritual life and our right to all the treasures of God ; from another, the force of God's Holy Spirit, to aid us in our warfare with the devil ; from another, the food with which our soul sustains its life ; from another, the balsam which heals any wounds received in our warfare with the devil ; one enables those, who under God gave us our natural life, to do their duty to us and to each other ; another furnishes us with worthy ministers to dispense the mysteries of God ; and the last of them cleanses us from every stain before we pass through the gate of death into the presence of Our Lord and Master.

What more could that kindest, most generous of masters do to save the creatures whom His hands have fashioned ? He could do one thing more ! He could give them the key of His treasure-house, and that act also He has done, by putting into our hands the power of prayer, that omnipotent power by which we may, in a sense, bend to our will, the will of God Himself.

If these means lose their power to save us, to what shall we look for aid to win for ourselves the one thing necessary ? But you will ask, can they lose their efficacy ? There is, alas ! but too great a certainty that they can. An evil habit of sin

not only is able to neutralise, but it actually does neutralise all their salutary influence upon our souls. How it effects this, is a matter deserving of your most serious and attentive consideration. Habit, as you must know, is a facility in doing any action, acquired by frequently repeated acts. This facility in time becomes so great as to be a kind of second nature, so that almost without the advertence of our intelligence, we are able to perform that of which we have contracted the habit. You have, no doubt, seen many instances of this among the boys with whom you live. When they have been accustomed to go to a certain desk, they almost instinctively go to it again, even when they have changed to another. Also, in the services of the church, you may have noticed how often they sing *Alleluia* at the end of the *Deus in adjutorium*, when the rubric of the season requires that it should be omitted. How often, too, when speaking with their Superiors do they inadvertently slip into certain modes of expressing themselves, modes which they studiously endeavour to avoid, and yet make use of to their own great confusion and embarrassment. Now if habit is so powerful in causing us, almost in spite of ourselves, to do these innocent actions, judge what must be its force in hurrying us on to the commission of acts, to which our own fallen nature and the malice of the devil impel us. At first we are guilty of one act, which leads to another. Then we commit that act three or four times in the same week. At last it becomes a habit and hurries us into the abyss of evil, the waters of which close over our heads till we are made almost of one nature with it.

The effect of these oft-repeated acts is most disastrous to our spiritual life. When we first sinned, our conscience spoke out and upbraided us with our sin. As we advanced into the depths, its voice grew fainter and fainter, till at last it was inaudible. The inward monitor being silenced, evil soon familiarises us with its repulsive features, till we begin to deem them beautiful and worthy of our love. Thus, one of the means ordained by God for our guidance in the path of virtue is lost to us. We have yet many others. We may go to confession and thus recover the spiritual life that we have lost. We may

approach the Holy Table and feed that life, till once again it is strong and vigorous. But the habit of sin very often turns these remedies, which are full of spiritual life, into deadly poisons inflicting upon us eternal death. For the habitual sinner either neglects the Sacraments, and thus withdraws himself from the fountains of living water, or profanes them by approaching unworthily, and thus transforms them into sources whence he imbibes destruction.

As for prayer, the habit of sin speedily plays havoc with it. The sinner begins to feel that it is a mere mockery to utter words which his heart does not mean, which his life belies, which if answered would deprive him of that which he worships as his God. In the early stages of his downward career he feels that he cannot pray ; as time goes on, that he has no will to pray ; till at last he ends in having a positive loathing for that duty. Thus deprived of the warning voice of conscience, of the life-giving Sacraments, and of the mighty weapon, prayer, he stands defenceless, a prey to the devil, to be his slave in this world, and the object of his furious hatred in the next. This is the danger to which a habit of sin exposes its miserable victims.

That state is truly appalling ! But surely there is hope, for hope endures as long as there is life. The habitual sinner may repent. Quite true ; he may repent. But consider the well-nigh inextricable difficulties in which he has involved himself, and you will see how small is his chance of conversion. He has frequently risen from the sin to which he has made himself a slave, and as frequently has fallen back into it. It is with the human soul as with a limb of the material body. If that limb is often broken, it is most difficult to mend. It is with the health of the soul as with the health of the body ; when that body has frequently had a relapse into the sickness which has attacked its life, well-nigh hopeless is its chance of recovery. Of course the remedies ordained by God for the healing of the soul, retain in themselves all their wondrous powers. But of what avail is the most powerful medicine, if the patient will not make use of it, or if he is in such a state as to be incapable of deriving benefit from it ? Even the

preliminary steps for the application of these remedies, such as exercises of piety, prayers and the like, are held by the habitual sinner in so great disgust, that the mere mention of them fills him with an indescribable loathing. Remorse, or the cry of conscience, does now and then make itself heard even to his dulled senses; but it is peremptorily silenced, that no disturbing element may be allowed to break his so-called peace. His aim is to be as far from God and from anything that will call to his mind either God or the things of God, as it is possible for human agency to remove him. The difficulties in which he is involved are so great that only a miracle of grace can extricate him from them and bring him back to God. "To do this," says St. Augustine, "is as great a work of almighty power, as to raise a man from the dead." Writing upon this subject, he bids us observe that in the Gospel there are given three instances in which this omnipotent power was exerted. The first, was that of the Ruler's daughter; the second, of the widow's son; and the third, of Lazarus. The Ruler's daughter had only just died; the widow's son was actually being carried to the grave; and Lazarus had already lain in the tomb for the space of four days. The daughter of Jairus represents the sinner who has but once or twice fallen; the young man of Naim, one who has plunged more deeply still into the foul waters; while Lazarus is taken for those who have contracted a habit of wrong-doing, who are bound in the chains of evil habits, and pressed down, under a ponderous stone, in the grave of sin.

The great doctor then calls upon us to notice the various degrees of effort exerted by Our Lord to rouse these three from the sleep of death, because that effort is significant of the difficulty of reclaiming an habitual sinner. He merely took the maid by the hand, and, addressing her as her mother would have done when awaking her from slumber, easily released her from the bonds of death. With the widow's son, a greater degree of force was necessary. He drew near and touched the bier; He caused those who carried it to stand still, and speaking with a voice of authority, He said: "Young man, I say to thee, arise!" In the case of Lazarus

the greatest degree of effort is visible. Standing over the grave from which He had ordered the stone to be removed, He raised His eyes to heaven ; He prayed ; He groaned and troubled Himself ; and then with a loud voice cried out : “ Lazarus, come forth !” If in this last case we have before us a figure of the habitual sinner, judge with what an exertion of divine power he is raised from his deplorable state. It is so great that we may conclude, with St. Augustine, that it requires as wonderful a miracle to bring it about, as it does to call a man back from the dead.

Therefore, carefully guard yourself against contracting a habit of grievous sin. When the evil spirit urges you to sin, by telling you with what ease you may repent and blot out its guilt, remember that each sin is the link of a chain which you are forging for yourself. One by one they unite and wrap you round, till at last you find yourself a prisoner, a slave, doing almost automatically the will of a hard and merciless taskmaster. Look at the danger to which this slavery exposes you. Consider the difficulties in which it involves you. Be wise in time, and let the fate of others be a useful lesson to you. If you have unfortunately already contracted a habit of sin, lose no time in striving to burst asunder the bonds which enfold you in their iron embrace. Pray earnestly to God for help. Humbly ask your friends to pray with you and for you. Go to the Sacraments. Persevere in your determination to be free, and you will soon acquire a mastery over yourself. For habit is overcome by habit. “ Use,” as we are told, “ almost can change the stamp of nature and master the devil, or throw him out with wondrous potency ”.

THE VIRTUE OF PURITY.

THE virtue opposed to that horrible vice, of which we have already said so much, is purity, to which theologians apply various names. When they wish to distinguish it from the uncleanness of the vice which besmears the soul with its filth, they call it purity ; when they wish to point out its external manifestation in the body, they call it modesty ; when they

desire to indicate the restraint which it puts upon the desire for carnal pleasures, they call it continence ; and when they speak of it as a virtue which may be practised in any state of life, they treat of it under the general term, chastity. They define it to be "a moral Christian virtue which consists in repressing and in moderating the unruly desires of the flesh". From whatever point of view we may look at it, it is a virtue most necessary, most beautiful, most dear to God, and alas ! also most easily lost.

May the thoughts which we will suggest to you under each of these heads inspire you with the firm resolve to win it for yourself, and to defend it as a treasure of priceless value.

We may, at the outset, take it for granted that no one is so great a fool as to desire to be lost ; for each of us naturally wishes to be happy, and even in the pursuit of vice, is aiming at the attainment of this primal instinct of his being. There is, consequently, in the heart of every one a wish to win for himself an eternity of bliss in heaven. "But who," asks the Psalmist, "shall ascend into that mountain of the Lord?" In reply to his own question, he says : "The innocent in hands and the clean of heart,"¹ for nothing defiled can enter that abode of holiness, nor stand before the white light of the awful sanctity of God. So deeply impressed with this evident truth were the men of all times and of all religions, that though they sometimes deified the vice which is most opposed to purity, yet they held in the highest esteem the virtue which they would not practise, and many of them deemed it to be most acceptable to the deities whom they worshipped. But setting aside the testimony of these as being of little worth in showing the necessity for this virtue, we find that under the old dispensation, as well as under the new, there were men who were deeply impressed with the royal Prophet's idea about the necessity for purity of heart for winning the beatitude of heaven.

In consequence of this conviction, Noah and his family, in the midst of a corruption so general that the Scripture

¹ Ps. xxiii. 3, 4.

says, "All flesh had corrupted its way," nevertheless were found clean and acceptable to God, and were therefore saved from the deluge which swept off the face of the earth the votaries of impurity. Even among the bestial inhabitants of Sodom, some few faithful souls had preserved themselves from contamination, because of their firm conviction that God should exclude from His kingdom all who were guilty of these frightful excesses. Enlightened by the same truth, the chaste Susannah preferred to incur dis-honour in the eyes of men, rather than stain her soul with the filth of that sin which would for ever have banished her from the presence of God. Because he feared a similar chastisement, Joseph in Egypt gladly endured the hardships of his prison-house rather than sully the purity of his soul with fleshly delights which he knew should deprive him of the vision of God.

Under the new dispensation, how many were there among the bright-robed army of martyrs who might have escaped a most cruel death, if they would but have sacrificed their purity to the lust of their persecutors! But they feared to lose that home of bliss and the possession of their God. They knew that only the clean of heart can enter there; that everything defiled is excluded thence; and, therefore, they chose death rather than dishonour. All these instances, and a thousand more which might be cited, show us clearly the necessity for that purity without which we cannot unlock for ourselves the gates of heaven, nor bear to look upon the face of God.

Of the beauty of purity, we need only say that it clothes the soul with a loveliness so dazzling as to make it like unto the Angels of God. You may form for yourself some notion of the entrancing beauty of these heavenly Spirits, if you bear in mind that when St. John, in his vision in the Island of Patmos, saw one of them, he fell down before his celestial visitant. He was about to adore him, for he thought that he was God. Now, what the Angel is by nature, that the soul becomes by the infusion into it of this angelic virtue. The brilliancy of that heavenly gift causes the reflection of itself

to shine through the frail body which the soul informs, and gives to the most homely features a dignity, a sweetness, and a repose which attract and fill with admiration the minds of even worldly men, so that they are forced to exclaim in the words of the Wise Man: "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory!"¹

If this virtue attracts and fills with love the hearts of men, how dear must it be to God! See how He loves and covers with glory, and chooses for His great offices, those in whose souls this pearl of dazzling whiteness shines resplendent. When He wished to reprove Heli the High Priest for his negligence in not correcting his sons, and for permitting them to scandalise by their unholy lives the people who came to offer sacrifice, He chose out the child Samuel who dwelt in the House of the Lord. He called him by name, and committed to him the message presaging impending woe to the people of God. He made him a great prophet, a leader of Israel, because he was most pure of heart. When the Word became incarnate and walked about among men, see with what gentleness and love He received the little children who pressed around Him! He took them to His bosom; He pressed them to His sacred heart; He laid His holy hands upon their heads; He kissed them, and proposed them as models for all who wished to enter the kingdom of heaven. Why did He show them all these marks of special affection? Because they were pure.

During the period of His missionary career, a young man one day came to Him, and falling down at His feet asked Him to point out by what means he might win eternal life. Our Lord at once gave him a summary of the commandments of God, by keeping which he should without fail find his way into the abode of the blessed. On hearing His reply, the young man said to Him: "All these I have kept from my youth". Thereupon the Evangelist tells us that Jesus cast upon him a look of love, and His whole heart went out to him. Here again it was the purity of the young man's life

¹ Wisd. iv. 1.

that won His special affection. But when we bear in mind that He would not assume our human nature except from a virginal mother, this one fact speaks most emphatically and impresses upon us the love of God for purity. How He loved that Mother who bore Him ! That which drew Him to her was her virginal purity. All during His life that love for her and for all who like her were dowered with her distinguishing virtue, were the special objects of His predilection. Look at St. John ! How tenderly was he loved by Our Lord because of his purity of heart ! He suffered him to lean upon His bosom ; He told him who it was that would betray the Son of Man ; He would not permit him to die a violent death ; and on the Cross He bequeathed to him the most precious treasure that He had on earth—His own most holy Mother !

Now, though purity is a virtue so necessary for us, so beautiful in the eyes both of God and of men, and so dear to the heart of Jesus Christ, it is one that is most easily lost. A glance of the eye may strike it as with a deadly blight ; a word may blast it as with a pestilential wind ; a passing thought may consume it as with a lightning flash. Like some delicate flower, the beauty of which delights the eye and fills the senses with its fragrant odour, it withers and dies as the flower does when touched by the hand of a thoughtless wayfarer. Like the shining surface of a polished mirror, a mere breath will dim its lustre. We carry it with us in vessels of clay, and round us on every side there flit the spirits of evil, eager to snatch it from us, to trip up our feet, and to tread it in the mire. No length of years is deemed by them as lost, no subtle device as misapplied, no labour as burdensome, if only they can compass their wicked aim. Therefore, the boy who would preserve his purity untarnished, is like one who carries a precious vessel along the side of a frightful precipice ; he is like the three children in the Babylonian furnace, circled with a raging fire ; like Daniel in the den of lions, beset by raging beasts. How cautiously must he walk, that no unguarded step may cast him into the yawning abyss ! How earnestly must he pray, that the flames may not devour him ! What strength must be in his glance, to keep at bay the

ferocious beasts that snarl, and growl, and show their hideous teeth on every side of him.

O child of God ! beware ! Remember what that is which you carry in the sanctuary of your heart. It is a jewel that Jesus Christ has purchased for you by His precious blood. Without that priceless gem glittering in your soul, you will never pass through the golden gates. When you stand there knocking for admission, the glorious Angel who holds the key will look for that jewel before admitting you into the bright realms beyond. Therefore, guard it with all your strength. If you always bear in mind how beautiful it is, how dear to the heart of God, how easily lost, you will deem no pains too great to defend it against the incessant assaults of the most wicked one, and of all his hellish host. You will not trust to your own strength. You will invoke the powerful intercession of her who is the purest of God's creatures, and the aid of her Almighty Son. Under the shadow of His wings you will be safe, and no subtlety of the devil will be able to wrest your treasure from your grasp. You will carry it to the foot of the great throne, there to be crowned with the victor's laurels, which will never fade.

MEANS TO PRESERVE PURITY.

FROM what has been said in the preceding Lecture, you will understand how precious is the treasure which was committed to your keeping when, in holy Baptism, your soul was flooded with the grace of purity. Bearing that priceless jewel in a vessel of clay, you were then sent forth to walk the rugged paths of life, and told to carry it safe into the presence of God. How shall you be able to comply with this difficult mandate ? On every side your way is beset by malignant robbers, always on the watch to catch you unawares and snatch it from your hands. How shall you be able to defeat their evil intent ? You must act as men of the world act when their gold, or their silver, is in jeopardy from the hands of thieves. They watch ; they shun everything that would expose their wealth to be clutched by their enemies ; they implore the aid of others to

help them in their efforts to keep what is their own. Therefore, to guard your purity, you must watch over it ; you must flee from all that would endanger it ; you must pray to God for help to resist your foes, who slumber not nor sleep in their unwavering purpose to rob you of it, and thus to compass your eternal ruin.

Spiritual writers insist much upon vigilance over all the passions, but they are particularly earnest in their exhortations to vigilance against that passion which ever aims at the destruction of the purity of the soul. The reason of this zeal on their part is not far to seek. It is because they know that for the destruction of purity, the devil holds out a bait which is the most seductive among all the other various means which he employs for the ruin of men. It is sweeter than honey to the palate. To accept it requires no effort, but fills the heart with an unholy delight. The death which it inflicts is full of pleasure. Besides this, it is most easily brought into the closest proximity with the soul. Like a subtle vapour, it is taken in through all the senses of our bodily frame, and through all the faculties of our soul. It attracts the eye ; it appeals to the imagination ; it fills the mind. It is so noiselessly wafted to every avenue of our being, that its spell is felt before the intelligence, which keeps guard over the citadel of the heart, is aware of its presence. Hence the necessity for unwearied vigilance against that which is so insidious in its approach, so powerful to secure an entrance, and so difficult to eject when once it has effected that entrance. If then you have thoroughly grasped the value of that virtue against which its assault is directed ; if you understand its necessity, its beauty, and the high esteem in which it is held by God, you will watch. You will be as wakeful as a soldier is whose post is in the front, and whose life may pay the penalty for a moment of carelessness. You will guard all the entrances by which your foe may approach the treasure over which you stand sentry. You will watch your eyes ; you will watch your heart ; you will watch your hands ; you will watch your ears. There must be no drowsiness on your part, no slumbering, no sleeping at your post. If there should be any,

there will happen to you that which has happened to so many others of whom we read in the Sacred Scripture. It was while Sisara slept secure, that Jabel drove the tent-pin through his temples and nailed him to the earth. It was while Samson slept, that his deceitful wife sheared away the locks in which lay his marvellous strength. It was "while men were asleep," that an enemy came in the darkness of the night and oversowed the good wheat with tares. So will it be with you also. If you be not vigilant over the treasure of your purity, you will one day awake and find that it has gone, and that it is in the clutches of your enemy. Therefore, in the words of Our Lord, I say to you : "Watch".

In addition to being vigilant, there is another counsel with which you must comply if you would defend, and successfully defend, your purity from these hellish robbers. They are your bitterest enemies, and you will naturally expect me to tell you manfully to resist them. That, however, is not what I advise. You must flee from them ; for, as one of the Saints has very truly said : " In this contest, only cowards are victors ". It is not those that fight, but those that run away who triumph in this battle. The reason is, that the attraction towards impurity is so powerful, and the resistance on our part so weak, that to face the evil is almost certain death. So long as you keep steel at a distance from the magnet, it does not fly to it, although their reciprocal tendency to each other is so strong. So is it also with the soul and this detestable evil. Keep them apart, at a great distance from each other, and the soul is safe. But powder is not more ready to explode when brought in contact with fire, snow to melt when exposed to the rays of the sun, and water to congeal when subjected to the searching winds of winter, than the soul is to yield to uncleanness when brought under the influence of impurity. The only safety, therefore, is in fleeing from it as men flee from a pestilence. Joseph fled from the hand that was stretched out to pluck from him his chastity, and thus preserved it from stain. Those who neglect to imitate him, will have to weep over their folly. Consequently, you must speedily flee away from everything that might be unto you

an occasion of falling into this sin. The occasion is the spark which causes the explosion, the sun which melts our resolution, the searching wind which freezes us up and deprives us of the power to run away. Do not be cheated by the devil into the belief, that the attraction to sin has died out of your heart; that those who led you into it have reformed; that there is no danger for you now in going into the occasion. The attraction is not dead, it is only asleep; though both you and your seducer have reformed your lives, the fire still smoulders in your bosoms; there is always danger in the occasion, and those who love that danger will perish in it, says the Holy Ghost, the God of truth. Therefore, cast to the winds these vain excuses made up for you by the devil, who flatters in order to destroy. Trust to the experience of the wise who counsel flight. Obey the command of God, Who in forbidding evil, forbids also that which leads to it. In God's name, then, flee away; look not back; save yourself in the mountains beyond the reach of your enemy.

By vigilance, you may prevent your enemy from clutching you, from "laying hold of you," as St. Paul expresses it; by flight, you will very often escape even the temptation to sin; but there are occasions when the devil, in spite of your watchfulness, will surprise you, and notwithstanding your flight, will pursue and come up with you. What are you to do then? You must pray. You must pray not only then, but before that time, in fact always. Without this, vigilance is worthless; so is flight. Prayer is your weapon, your sword. Of what use is it for a soldier to be on the watch for the enemy, to see them coming, to give the alarm, and then not to strike a blow for his life? Of what use is it to flee from a powerful foe, if when that foe comes up with you, you do not face about and smite him to the earth, or at least do your utmost to strike him down? This is what prayer enables you to do. It puts a magic sword into your hand, and helps you to use it with so great effect, that it will cause you to be victorious in every fight. Therefore, you must pray, and pray continually, for purity, for the preservation of the purity which you have been so fortunate as either to have

kept unstained, or to have recovered by washing away all stains in the blood of the Lamb. For, never forget that purity is a gift of God. You cannot preserve it, nay, you cannot procure it by your own unaided efforts. It is obtained by prayer. "As I knew," said Solomon, "that I could not otherwise be continent unless God gave it, . . . I went to the Lord, and besought Him, . . . with my whole heart."¹

God gave it to him among the other inestimable gifts with which He enriched him. He preserved it as long as he prayed; but when in his old age he turned away and ceased to pray, he not only lost that, but he was stricken with so great folly as to bow down and adore the filthy idols of those who gratified his lust. You must, consequently, be earnest in your endeavours to acquire a habit of prayer. For this purpose begin at once to be earnest in prayer. You know what it is to be in earnest about anything. It is to take a deep interest in it; to let it absorb all your energies; to throw your whole heart into it. Therefore, be earnest in prayer. Do not dream away the time allotted to it. Do not be listless at it. Pray with all your soul when you begin the day, that you may pass through its fleeting hours without committing any sin. Pray with a thankful heart when that day has passed into eternity, that God has heard your morning petition, and kept you blameless in His sight. At the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, ask the Victim of Calvary to defend you from the attacks of the unclean devil. At the visits to the Blessed Sacrament, lift up your voice for the same purpose. Try to acquire the habit of frequently, during the course of each day, pouring forth ejaculatory prayers. Thus you will sanctify your time, your work, your recreation, and so steep your soul in divine grace, that it will be proof against all the assaults of the most wicked one.

These are the means most commonly recommended by spiritual writers, for the purpose of preserving the soul from the clutches of the unclean devil. They are not difficult to

¹ Wisd. viii. 21.

put in practice. They are simply the measures usually employed by every one to keep his property from the hands of robbers. Therefore, do not think it a hardship to do for the most precious possession that you have, what men do for their crops, or their cattle, or their gold. Watch over it with the utmost care. Flee away from temptation and from all that might be an occasion of temptation. Be careful in your choice of companions. Shun those whose converse is not clean, whose conduct is light and unbecoming. Close your eyes against dangerous objects and wicked books. Be a coward in this respect, and you will be a victor. Above all things acquire a facility, or, in other words, a habit of prayer. Clad in this armour of triple proof, you will defy the devil and laugh at his attempts to pierce it, and to carry off that which it covers with its protecting shield.

DEATH.

AFTER listening to a stirring discourse upon the malice of deadly sin, a boy once followed the preacher to his room, and said to him : "Father, will you tell me what I must do in order to keep out of that terrible evil?" Taking up his Bible and opening it at the seventh chapter of the Book of Ecclesiasticus, the priest pointed to the fortieth verse, and said : "Read that. It is the prescription of the Holy Ghost. Follow it, and you will never sin." The boy looked at the passage indicated, and read these well-known words: "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin". As far as this world is concerned, our last end is death. The remembrance of it is evidently a powerful deterrent from sin. We shall, therefore, do well to fix our minds upon the thought of death, in order that the salutary fear, which will be the outcome of our reflections, may make us so wary as to prevent us from ever entangling our feet in the meshes of that seductive evil.

Let us suppose that Death has glided into this College, and has laid his icy hand upon the heart of one of the boys. That boy at once falls ill. He is taken from among his companions. A few days pass by ; he does not grow better.

Yet a few more, and a whisper runs the round of the School, that he is dying. The night passes away ; the bright morning comes ; and with a solemn face and an unsteady voice, the Prefect announces that he is dead ! There is a thrill of awe ; fear strikes the hearts of all ; and a deep gloom settles down upon the College. In due course the boys go to see the remains of him, who but a few weeks ago lived in their midst, so full of youthful energy. There he now lies, so white, so still. His eyes are closed for ever ; his lips are sealed ; his ear is deaf to the voice of his dearest friend ; his heart insensible to the love of the mother who will so bitterly lament his loss.

Let us consider what death means for that boy, for it will have for us also the same meaning. It means for him, first of all, that time has ceased. There is for him no longer a succession of minutes and hours, of days, of months, and of years. For him, the seasons will no longer follow one another in unbroken order, spring melting into summer, summer declining into autumn, autumn burying itself in winter. With time have ceased the occupations which filled up its fleeting moments. There are now no games, no lessons, no conversation with companions, no books to read. The relations which he had with those around him have ceased. There are no masters to advise, to guide, to direct him. His companions whom he cherished with all the ardour of boyish affection, are for him as if they had never been. His father, his mother, his relatives—all that home circle which regarded him as its brightest jewel, has suddenly snapt in twain, and he has dropped out of it, and sunk into the abyss of eternity. The opportunities of correcting himself, of purifying his heart, of advancing in virtue, of winning the crown for which God gave him the brief span of life, all these have slipped away. Darkness has enveloped him in the pall of death ; deep night has come down upon him—that night in which no man can work, “time shall be no longer”.

Besides robbing him of time, Death has stripped him of all that he possessed. A schoolboy does not possess many things ; but few as they are, they are to him all that worldly

goods are to the grown-up man ; and as we gaze upon them, we sigh as we reflect that they shall be his no longer. We look into his desk. There are the little odds and ends which constituted all his worldly wealth : the books over the pages of which his eyes have often glanced ; the pen which his hand has guided ; the souvenirs of home—marks of affection from those whom he loved, the prayer-book out of which he has prayed, the rosary on which he has counted his orisons to our Lady. His companions sigh as they pass his cap, hanging useless in its accustomed place, or the implements with which he played, or the thousand and one little memorials which are left behind, and which he shall not need any more. He may have borne an illustrious name ; it shall be his no longer. Wealth may have been laboriously won for him by a father who centred on him all his hopes ; it shall go to others. A position may have been prepared for him, a position which would have given him an envied station in the world ; but another shall now occupy it. Death has despoiled him of all these. As he came naked into the world, naked also does he leave it.

Death has gone farther still. It has robbed him of that house of clay, his body, in which the bright soul dwelt for a few years. The soul has been forcibly ejected from its frail tenement. Close and intimate has been its union with that dwelling-place. It has been to him not merely a house in which to abide, but a most dear friend to whom he has clung with a love felt for nothing else. He has never known what existence separated from it is like. He has shrunk with horror from the thought of that inevitable divorce, and struggled vainly to maintain the cherished companionship. Alas ! all in vain ! Death has rudely cut asunder the bonds which united them ; unlocked the door ; thrown open every entrance ; quenched the fires ; extinguished the lights ; and thrust forth the bright spirit into the darksome land of eternity !

His spoliation ends not even here. That beautiful casket in which the glittering jewel has been kept, will not be suffered by Death to endure, when that which constituted all its worth has been taken away. He will utterly demolish it, and reduce

it to the dust out of which God fashioned it. Men shrink with horror from the contemplation of the ruin which Death forthwith begins to work. Let us, however, not be afraid to gaze upon it. The sight, awe-inspiring as it is, will help to make us afraid of sin. Approach, then, and look at the body of him who sat by your side in the study ; who played with you at your games ; knelt by your side at the altar ; and worshipped with you in the silent chapel. Contemplate that lifeless form, as St. Francis Borgia contemplated the corpse of Queen Isabella, and let your schoolfellow be for you, that which the departed queen became for him,—an eloquent preacher to persuade you to live for God, from Whom Death itself cannot separate you. The signs of decay soon begin to make their appearance. The livid hue of corruption spreads over the waxen face. An offensive odour exhales from the decomposing members. The dearest friends cannot endure it. Hence, the lifeless form is speedily encased in a wooden shell. Though bitterly mourning his loss, yet they are anxious to hurry it from the abode of the living ; and with prayers and tears, a last farewell is sighed out over it, as it descends into the narrow grave. The earth is piled over it, and the worms complete the work of Death. In a short time, only the hideous framework of that house of clay remains. Yet a few years, and even that will fall to pieces. Its parts will crumble into dust ; and the curse pronounced in Eden upon fallen man will be fully accomplished : “Dust thou art, and into dust shalt thou return”.

Remember these things ! They are the accompaniments of that end of life, that end which we call death. Death puts his finger upon the clock of time, and causes it, as far as we are concerned, to stop for ever. How precious is that time which is now yours ! During its fleeting moments, you can win for yourself the possession of God. How do you employ it ? You waste it in idleness. You stamp its brief moments with the impress of sin. It is rapidly hurrying on ; as rapidly as the sand runs out of the hour-glass. For you, it will very soon be utterly gone ! Oh ! make a good use of it ! Employ it in work done for God. Use it to correct your evil

habits ; to acquire virtue ; to lay up for yourself treasures which will support you during eternity.

Death strips you of all your earthly possessions. Do not now fasten your heart upon any of them. Above all things, never barter your immortal soul for their sake. Be detached from them, and as you look upon them, say to yourself : " I must yield these up to another ; they will presently cease to be mine ".

Death separates you from your body. Your body is for you now the occasion of many a sin. It is irrational ; it is animal ; it has, consequently, animal instincts, and craves for the satisfaction of them. Learn, therefore, to subject it to reason. Deny it that for which it craves, and never suffer it to become your master.

Death strikes your body with corruption. Do not, therefore, be proud of that which soon must become an object of horror to your most loving friends, and moulder into dust amid the darkness and corruption of the tomb. Be not vain of your beauty or of your strength, of your high birth or of your great wealth. All these end in the grave. Frequently meditate upon death, and that meditation will be a powerful means of withholding you from the commission of deadly sin.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH.

THE hand of Death, as we have seen, strips man of all that he holds most dear ; it takes away that time which though so shamefully abused, is yet most precious ; it robs him of all his possessions ; it deprives him of even that body in which his soul sojourned ; it dissolves the very elements of which it is composed into the dust out of which God fashioned it. This is what death means from the point of view of him who, by its fatal blow, is hurried into eternity. But from our point of view, there are in it certain circumstances which invest it for us with new terrors. Upon these circumstances, familiar as they already are to us, we must meditate ; for only serious thought can make these commonplace truths stand out before

our minds in that clear, well-defined shape, which arrests the attention of even the most indifferent spectator.

The first circumstance connected with death, a circumstance with which every one is so well acquainted, is its *uncertainty* : "At what hour you think not, the Son of man will come".¹ Shall it be when you have grown up to man's estate, or while you are still in all the bloom of your youthful years? Shall it be here at School, or when you are out in the busy world? Shall it be in the land of your birth, or upon some foreign shore? We know not. You are young; you are strong; you are healthy. Surely there are before you many long years of useful life. Quite true. But, walk out into the public cemetery, and search among the tombs of the silent dead. Not all the graves are large ones. Behold, here is one in which repose the remains of a boy of fourteen; there, is one of a young man of twenty; there, of a child of only four years. Look around you, and call to mind those whom you have known. Death took one in all the pride and hope of his early manhood, leaving behind his grey-haired father to mourn his loss. He snatched away another who had never known what it is to be ill for even a single hour, but spared his friend who for years had dragged on a weary existence with one foot in the grave. The robust fell before his dart, while the feeble survived, as if unworthy of his steel.

Death has no respect for youth; health is a buckler through which his arrows easily pierce; strength is a defence at which he scornfully laughs. It is his custom to creep stealthily upon men, like a thief in the night. His blow is always a surprise, as if to verify that saying of Our Lord's, "At what hour you think not, the Son of man will come," in the person of this grim messenger, to summon you to your account. We have known a case, in which a boy quitted the playground full of life and energy; only one short hour afterwards, a Superior passing through the dormitory, found him lying in his cubicle, a corpse! Another boy suddenly fainted away, in what the bystanders thought to be a

¹ St. Luke xii. 40.

slight attack of illness ; but out of that fainting fit he never awoke. Another quitted his parents, hoping at the end of the Term to see them again ; but when the Term had come to an end, that boy lay sepulchred in his narrow grave, while at home a mother sat waiting for a footstep the sound of which would never again fall upon her ears ! Therefore, death is uncertain ; it may come at any moment ; it will surely come when we least expect its advent.

Now, though the time, the place, and the manner in which Death will come are all so uncertain, yet, that he will come to quench the light of our life, is *most certain*. It would be idle for us to waste words in attempting to prove that which every one admits. It is a truism ; therefore, all proof of it is superfluous. Yet, because it is a truism, it needs some little thought to make you feel its truth, and to bring that truth home to your mind ; you must, therefore, consider the *certainties* of death.

You will die. The news will be carried on the wings of the wind, to your parents and to your friends. There will be tears and aching hearts for your loss. Among your companions, there will be sorrow mingled with fear. Some will make strong resolves to amend their lives, and to be ready when the summons comes for them also ; others will banish the thought of you from their minds, that its presence there may not interfere with their joys and their pleasures.

The next certainty, is that you will be *forgotten*. For a short time, no doubt, your name will live among your companions. Occasionally it will come up in the course of conversation. They will pity you, and perhaps will say a prayer for the repose of your soul. Gradually even the memory of you will die out. Another will sit at your desk ; will kneel in the chapel in the place where you have knelt ; will fill the office which you have filled. If you die at College, your grave will be visited now and then, and those who knew you will stand cap in hand over the spot where your remains lie entombed. But in a few years, all who were acquainted with you will have gone away, and those who never saw you will inquire, when they read your name, who you were, and how

you died. At last, there will be in your case, as in the case of all others, total oblivion.

A third certainty, is that you will not be *missed*. If you doubt this, and fondly hope that the gap left by you will never be filled, call to mind the names of those who have finished their school-life, and who, during their brief career there, were considered to be indispensable. No game could be initiated, except by them ; no public entertainment set on foot, unless they were interested in it ; no plan of any worth carried into execution, unless they had devised it. They dropped out of the circle in which they were held in high esteem. Some persons spoke of their departure as a calamity for the School, and ventured to predict that their loss would be an irreparable one. Well, what happened ? As soon as they were gone, other boys stepped to the front, and led the way in all the little events of that little schoolboy world. They filled the position vacated by the recently worshipped idol, as well at least, and in the opinion of some, even a little better, than the departed heroes. In a few months, those worthies were forgotten. In their case there happened that which happens in the case of those who fill the loftiest positions : "The king is dead ; Long live the king !" So will it be with you. No matter how useful, how popular, how much beloved you may be, you will not be missed. As soon as you are out of sight, laid to rest under the green turf of the graveyard, not only will you be out of mind, but you will be as if you had never been. It is with us as when a man fills a vessel with water from a lake. The spot whence he draws it is agitated for a moment ; the waters presently close over it ; that which is withdrawn is not missed. These are the certainties, or at least some of the certainties of death.

There are connected with it also other certainties which, as spiritual writers observe, are of a mixed character. It is, for instance, certain with the certainty of divine faith, that the soul on quitting the body is not resolved into thin air, but that it enters upon its new life, the life of eternity : "Man shall go into the house of his eternity". There are, however, two states of being in that eternity. Our Lord speaks of these two, when

treating of the sentence which the Great Judge shall pass upon the Saints and upon the reprobate. To the Saints He will say : " Come ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ". To the reprobate He will say : " Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels ". Into which of these two eternities shall the soul fall —that soul which has just winged its flight from the prison of the flesh ? That is uncertain !

Generally speaking, men die as they have lived ; for death, as we are told, is but the echo of life. This too is a certainty. But it is not certain that those who have lived well, will die well ; nor is it certain that those who have lived ill, will make an evil end. There are on record terrible examples of men who, after a virtuous life, have in the end fallen away, and made shipwreck of their souls ; while examples are not wanting of scandalous sinners who, after long lives of impiety, at last made their peace with God, and died the death of the just.

Men also tell us, on the authority of Scripture, that where the tree falls, there it shall lie. This is a certainty. But on which side will it fall ? Will it be towards the north, or towards the south, towards the east, or towards the west ? That is uncertain. Generally speaking, it will fall on the side towards which, during its life, it has inclined its branches and its trunk ; but there is no certainty in which direction it will eventually fall.

These, then, are the circumstances which surround the death of every man. Knowing how uncertain is the time, the place, and the manner of your death, you ought ever to be on the watch, and ready to meet your God. He will come when you least expect Him, as the bridegroom did in the case of the foolish virgins, when their lamps were extinguished, their crusies empty, and they themselves fast asleep. Therefore, grow not remiss. Never say to yourself : " My Lord is long a coming ; I may indulge myself meanwhile, and make all right by the time that He shall be at hand ". Let your accounts be correct, and you yourself prepared to receive Him, so that when He calls, you may be able to answer : " Lo ! here I am ! "

Being well aware that you must die ; that once the breath of life has left your body you will speedily be forgotten ; that though holding an important post you will never be missed, begin to detach your affections from all those things which you must so soon abandon. The more closely you wrap your heart-strings around them, the more painful will be the wrench which you will feel when death shall tear them away from you. Above all things, do not be so foolish as, for the sake of these perishable things, to offend your good God.

Keep well before your mind that either a happy or a miserable eternity awaits you. It is uncertain which will be your portion, for perseverance cannot be merited by your good works. It may be granted to your fervent prayers. Therefore, do not grow lukewarm in your service of God. Keep alive in your heart the fire of fervour, and it will enable you daily to make vigorous efforts at the work of your salvation. Thus the advent of the great, the much-feared messenger of God, will be stripped of its terrors. You will be found watching ; you will be prepared to give in your accounts ; and those accounts will meet with the approval of your Lord : “Blessed is that servant who, when his Lord shall come, shall be found watching”.

THREE KINDS OF DEATH.

WE may safely say, that the boys in any School may be divided into three classes. The first, consists of those who unfortunately give themselves up to sin ; the second, of those who, though not slaves to this cruel taskmaster, are yet only very lukewarm in their service of God ; the third, of those who are really and truly fervent and devoted children of Jesus Christ. If, then, it is a generally admitted fact, that as men live, so do they die—for death is but the echo of life—we may conclude that there are three kinds of death : the death of the sinner, the death of the lukewarm, and the death of the just. One of these three kinds of death will, of a certainty, be yours. It is, therefore, only wise and prudent that you should consider each of them in succession, that you may

be moved to lead that kind of life which will secure for you the kind of death which you desire.

“The death of the wicked,” says the Psalmist, “is very evil.”¹ This is literally true from whatever point of view we choose to look at it. Let us suppose that a boy who has been leading a wicked life is touched by the hand of Death, and that the process by which the dread messenger of God robs him of his breath is a long one, giving him ample time to set his house in order, and to prepare for the inevitable. This leisure may be a great mercy, a last effort on the part of God to win him back to the path of duty. Will he take advantage of it? The probability is that he will not. Just call to mind any sickness through which you have passed, and say what you were able to do while its depressing weight held you down a prisoner upon your bed. Your head was heavy and weary; your mind disquieted and full of unrest; your thoughts were busied about the remedies that should help you to shake off your malady; your will was averse from contemplating the danger threatening you.

Now, after a life of sin, to turn from it and to be converted to God, are acts which require the combined strength of all your faculties. Even when you are in perfect health, these are works of considerable difficulty. How much more so when the mind is clouded; when the senses are dulled with pain; and when every effort of would-be friends is employed to screen from your eyes that which might rouse you up to make the necessary effort? No, sickness is but too often not taken advantage of, and, consequently, the work which might be accomplished in its early stages, has at last to be done in a hurry during the few moments which precede final dissolution.

If, as is frequently the case, the violence of the malady deprive any one of his senses, he will of course be spared the anguish of the sinner who is about to meet his Judge. The memory of his ill-spent life will not be flashed, like a hideous dream, before the eyes of his mind. He will not see the sins which crowd to the bar to give their evidence against him, nor

¹ Ps. xxxiii. 22.

the miserably abused time which cries out against him, nor the graces so ruthlessly trampled by him under foot. But is this utter insensibility to the danger impending over him a favour? Is it to be desired? Is it not a punishment? The contemplation of these things might bring about his conversion. The fact of their being hidden from him is a grave obstacle to the accomplishment of that, to him, all-important duty.

If, however, he is taken away suddenly in the midst of his sins, with all their foul, leprous defilement encrusting his soul, what an evil is death then to him? To be presented thus before the throne of an all-holy God; to be judged for every thought he ever thought, and every word he ever spoke, and every deed he ever did; to be condemned; to be banished from the face of God with His curse blasting him for all eternity—this indeed is terrible! Therefore, from whatever point of view we look at the sinner's death, it is, in the words of the Psalmist, "very evil"!

If the death of the sinner is very evil, surely the death of the lukewarm will not be so utterly bad and wretched. The tepid, half-hearted Christian must surely not be put upon the same level as the sinner who, with his eyes wide open, plunges headlong into sin. Is this really the case? We are afraid that it is not. Tepidity or lukewarmness, is a state most hateful to God. It is an attempt on the part of man, to halt midway between good and evil. It is a wish to serve two masters so diametrically opposed as are God and Mammon. To accomplish this is an impossibility. It must end in failure. For, those who are in this state, are deprived of the special favours which God extends to His faithful children. They are cut off from that abundant flow of graces vouchsafed to those who, by fervour of life, keep nigh unto Him. Being thus neglected and despised by God, they become weak and easily fall a prey to the devil; for, when he attacks them, they have not the strength to resist, nor the will to ask for that force which is necessary to withstand his onslaught. The consequence is that they fall, and fall grievously, often-times without being aware that they have lost the friendship

of God ; for, though not sensible of their defection, that insensibility is the result of their wilful blindness, and it is therefore imputed to them. Hence, the condition of a tepid, lukewarm boy, is practically the same as that of the open sinner ; so that when he comes to die, he is in precisely the same danger, and he will, in all probability, die the same kind of death.

When warned of his danger, he is so dead to the things of God, that he gives not heed to those who do him this charitable office. Knowing the severity of God's judgments towards those who have served Him ill, he clings to life with a tenacity pitiable to behold. But if the fact of impending dissolution does force itself upon the notice of the lukewarm, what a tempest of fear, we might almost say of despair, must it raise in their unhappy souls ! Upon what do they look back ? Upon a life in which scarcely a single action has been done as it ought to have been done. Prayers have been recited with the lips only, the heart being far away, fastened upon irrelevant trifles. In them there has been no attention, no devotion. Confessions have been made without due preparation, with imperfect examination, without sorrowful avowal, without contrition, without any purpose of amendment. Communion has been received without faith, through mere routine, because it chanced to be the custom of the School, and because the note of singularity would attach itself to them, if they did not approach the altar with the rest. There has been no attempt to curb temper, to repress vanity, to grow in truthfulness, to mortify sensuality. Looking back, they find no work that is full, none that they can say has been purely and seriously performed for God only.

What a wasted life ! Behold the Master is at hand ! He is coming to take an account of His steward. The accounts are all in confusion ; the talents committed to his care, squandered ; the work given him to accomplish, has not been even begun ! Darkness settles down upon his wretched soul. There is no hope, no consolation. The past is one inextricable tangle ; the future too dreadful to contemplate. Who can reassure him ? Who can promise him a favourable

judgment? True it is that God is merciful. But He is also just. Merciful as He is, He punished the wicked servant; He excluded the foolish virgins from the marriage feast; and thrust out into the exterior darkness in which there is weeping, in which there is gnashing of teeth, the daring intruder who entered the banqueting hall without being clad in the wedding garment.

If it is sad to contemplate the death of the tepid boy, and sadder still, nay, awe inspiring, to look upon that of the wicked, sinful boy, there is nothing but joy and consolation in dwelling upon the death of the fervent, God-fearing servant of Our Lord. Sometimes such a one is taken off in the twinkling of an eye. His death, in that case, causes sorrow, but there is an unutterable consolation in the thought of the life which he led, a life which made him fearless of death. Being already well prepared, he could answer like Samuel when the Lord called him: "Here am I". If time is allowed him, he uses it once again to review the past and purge it of any imperfections which may still disfigure it. He looks back through the years in which he has served God, and what does he see? Like a general on the conclusion of a successful campaign, he can look upon an unbroken series of victories. He has sorrowed for, and blotted out his sins in the blood of the Lamb; he has resisted the devil; he has conquered himself. To do this entailed many a hard and bitter struggle. It meant much self-denial. But when the smoke and the dust of the conflict had cleared away, there stood beside him a smiling Angel, whispering into his ear the words of His great Master: "Well done, good and faithful servant".

He thinks of the prayers offered up in the silent chapel; the hard study gone through with a pure intention; the daily Mass so devoutly heard; the weekly Communion so well prepared for, and followed by a fervent thanksgiving. All these actions now crowd around his bed of death, to encourage him and to speak in his favour before the bar of divine justice. The narrow grave in which his body will soon be laid, has no terrors for him. He knows that his Redeemer liveth, that in his flesh he shall see his God, and that the bones which now

are humbled, shall rise again to be vested with an honour, a glory, a beauty that will never fade. Even the dread judgment seat of the Lord is for him stripped of its terrors. Already he has over and over again judged, and condemned, and punished himself; he has blotted out by penitential tears the handwriting that stood against him; and all his misdeeds have been washed away by that flood of sorrow. Full of confidence, full of faith, of humility, and of firm, steadfast hope, he peacefully breathes forth his soul, with those sweet names: "Jesus and Mary" upon his lips. Oh! may my soul die the death of the just, and may my last end be like unto his.

You have now clearly before your mind's eye three kinds of death, corresponding to the three very different kinds of life usually led by boys at School. They, as it were, speak their lives into the vast abyss of time, which at death gives back to them the echo of that which they have committed to it. They cast their seed into the fruitful field of life, and that field brings forth for them a harvest, similar in nature to that which they have sown. Only a fool will expect to reap corn where he has sown thistles, and to gather grapes from the thorn which his folly has planted. He whose word is truth itself has said: "What a man sows, that he shall reap". If a boy sow naught but evil, he will reap an unholy death, and fall into the hands of an angry God; if he mingle with good seed the tares of a lukewarm service, he will discover, to his cost, that these noxious germs will spring up in rank luxuriance, and perhaps utterly choke whatever of good he has planted; if he sow good seed, he will reap good corn, he will die the death of the just, and his last end will be like unto theirs.

The choice of these three kinds of death is now in your own hands. God is by your side with His grace, to give you courage to do that which may cost you some little pain; His Angels are there to aid you by their prayers; His Saints stand around you to draw you on by their example. Therefore, now while there is time, do that which you will wish to have done, when the great leveller Death shall announce that for you, "time shall be no longer".

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

DEATH would not be so terrible, if nothing followed after it ; for though men shrink with instinctive horror from the thought of utter dissolution, yet that horror is nothing to the feeling of dread with which they contemplate the prospect of meeting their God, of being judged by Him, and of receiving at His hands the reward or the punishment which their lives have deserved. There can be no doubt, however, that this is the fate which awaits them : " It is appointed unto men," says St. Paul, " once to die, and after this, the judgment".¹ They must stand before the bar of Jesus Christ, " to Whom the Father hath given all judgment" ;² there " every one shall render an account for himself" ;³ there he shall be tried, in order that " he may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil".⁴ If this be true, and no one can doubt it without making shipwreck of the faith, then it will be for your advantage to look the inevitable straight in the face, and consider who the persons are that will take part in that all-important trial. In this, as in every trial, there will be a judge, an accused, and his accusers.

The Judge is Jesus Christ, true God and true Man. He is all wise. He knows everything. Nothing has escaped His eye. The deeds that have been done in darkness, were done under the noonday splendour of His presence. In the innermost folds of your conscience, thoughts have been generated. Human eye has not caught a glimpse of them ; human intelligence has not divined them ; but Jesus Christ has seen them ; He knows them. In the sanctuary of your heart, desires have sprung up, and have found an asylum there. Your most intimate friend has not a notion of their presence, or of their existence. They are familiar to your Judge. Men, it is true, have seen your actions. They have applauded them. But they have not seen your motives, those secret springs which set in motion the machinery of the deeds that have appeared.

¹ Heb. ix. 27.

³ Rom. xiv. 12.

² St. John v. 22.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 10.

Your Judge has seen these also, and, perhaps, He has not applauded. Nothing can escape Him : "Neither is there any creature invisible in His sight : but all things are naked and open to His eyes".¹

This most wise Judge is, at the same time, most holy. Between Him and sin, there is an antagonism that is at once eternal and absolute. His very nature is holiness. Nothing defiled can endure, for a single instant, in the blaze of that sanctity. Even the glorious Angels who stand in closest proximity to His awful throne, seem to be unclean when under the full blaze of the white light of His essentially pure nature. They veil their faces with their wings, and with lowly reverence, pour forth the adoration of their being, in words which express their conception of the dazzling purity of His holiness : "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Sabbaoth". Hence, He must hold in the utmost abhorrence all that is impure and sinful.

Besides being most wise, and, consequently, knowing every defect and sin ; besides being most holy, and, consequently, abhorring it with the whole force of His nature, He is omnipotent, and therefore is able to do whatsoever He pleases. No one can resist His will. No one can cause it to be set aside, or to be changed, or to be modified. That which He orders, must be done ; it must be done at once ; it must be done in its minutest particular.

He is a Judge Whom it is impossible to corrupt. In this world men who sit upon the judicial bench are sometimes softened by the prayers, the tears, the pleadings of friends and of skilful advocates. There are cases, too, in which these high dignitaries, forgetful of the majesty of the office which they bear, are turned aside from the right and even way into crooked and doubtful courses, by the potent spell which gold is able to throw over the heart of man. But this is impossible with God. When man comes before Him for judgment, justice, like an irresistible machine, holds on its course, sweeping aside as so much chaff the obstacles that would arrest it in its onward career.

¹ Heb. iv. 13.

Being all wise, He can be guilty of no error ; being most holy, He can show no mercy to evil that is not repented of ; being all powerful, and at the same time incapable of corruption, it must follow that the sentence which He pronounces can never be reversed. It is true, it is just, it is the decree of God, and it must hold good for ever. Such is the Judge before Whom man has to appear, when Death has issued his summons, and has cited him to the bar of divine justice.

Who is the accused, the culprit that is cited to appear before the great Judge ? It is, let us say, one of yourselves, that boy who has just died. One instant ago, he was surrounded by friends, by his confessor, his masters, his companions. His hand was clasped in that of his spiritual father ; holy words were sounding in his ear ; the Cross was held before his fading sight. All has gone like a lightning flash. He is alone, utterly alone with his God. He has never before felt this loneliness. In his troubles and sorrows, he knew that there were some to uphold, to comfort, and to counsel him. They have all vanished. He has brought nothing with him, but his deeds : "their works follow them". There is no one to protect him. There is no advocate. The time for the prayers of our Lady, for the intercession of the Saints, has ended. It is eternity now. In that still, endless present, nothing can be done for the salvation of the soul. He has met the eyes of Jesus Christ. He is full of fear. In that one look he has seen God ; and the light from God's face has shown him to himself.

He now sees, but in a way in which he never saw it before, that he is the creature of God, bound by every tie to devote his whole being to the honour and service of his Maker. He has looked into the face of God, and has seen that he was made according to the image and likeness of that all-holy Being. But how sadly changed from the creation which went forth from the hands of God ! Where is the image of God ? Where is the superscription by which we might know that he belongs to God ? A coin that is battered, and worn, and bent by long years of hard usage, does

not differ more from one that has been just issued from the Mint, bright and resplendent, than does the image impressed upon his soul, from that which it was when God bade it go forth into the vineyard and labour during the day of life.

But God did not send forth his soul empty-handed. It was dowered with the wealth of a king. Where is that purple garment with which it was clothed, a garment dyed in the royal blood of Jesus Christ? Where are the priceless gems with which it was beautified? Where are the golden talents with which it was enriched? The regal vesture is soiled and tattered; the gems have dropped from their settings; the talents have been squandered. Poor, naked, friendless, abandoned by all, the creature stands before its Creator. This is the accused, the poor prisoner who is about to be put upon his trial.

Now, although the Judge has a full and complete knowledge of the evil deeds committed by the culprit, yet there will be witnesses there to testify unto the truth of all that shall be alleged against him. If he were standing at the bar of an earthly tribunal, they would have upon their side that which is of the greatest advantage to a prosecution, a prisoner, an accused admitting his guilt; for the chief witness or accuser is his own conscience. It was present at every thought conceived in his brain; at every word uttered by his mouth; at every deed performed by his hand. It gave its testimony against him even then, and pursued him with its soft, low, reproachful voice, till passion at last succeeded in drowning its accents by its boisterous uproar. Now it speaks out again, clearly, unwaveringly. It gives in its verdict, and that verdict is against him.

To corroborate the testimony of conscience, there is the devil who tempted the poor soul, and by his wiles lured it away from God. He, too, has been present, and he has seen. He clothed himself in the vesture of an Angel of light to accomplish its ruin. Now he laughs over its misery, and attempts to triumph over God. What has the devil done for that soul, that it should have followed, clung to, and done his bidding? Nothing! What has he suffered for it?

Nothing! Jesus died for it ; it has trampled upon His blood. He made to it magnificent promises ; it has despised them. For what? To become the slave of Satan! Therefore, Satan will claim it as his own, by its own free election and deliberate choice.

The Guardian Angel, too, will stand by the culprit's side, now for the last time ; he will stand there as an accuser. He will recount his own labours, his unwearied attendance, his suggestions, his care to prevent him from falling into evil. He will tell of the graces refused, the inspirations rejected, the slovenly service done, the multitudinous acts of rebellion performed, the final rejection of God, that deed by which he set the seal upon his damnation. He will give in his evidence, and then will quit his side for ever.

There may be there the souls of those who have been his accomplices in sin. How these will then cry out for vengeance upon him! They have been condemned to hell, and they are there, perhaps, through his fault! What bitter reproaches will they hurl against him! How loudly, and with what justice, will they cry to God for his punishment! Christ died for these wretched souls, and the sinner has destroyed them. He has done the devil's work and dragged them into hell. As Our Lord says, the inhabitants of Tyre and of Sidon will rise up in judgment against him. They will lift up their hands in amazement when they see all that God has done for him. They will call loudly for his punishment, when they know of his miserable rebellion against God, and the foul ingratitude with which he has trampled upon God's graces. They will raise their voices and say : "Oh! if God had done for us, all that He has done for thee, we should now be among the elect! Had He been as patient, as long-suffering with us as He has been with thee ; had He remonstrated with us as He has remonstrated with thee ; had He sent to us the inspirations which He has sent to thee, we should have done penance in sackcloth and in ashes!"

Here you have before your eyes, the persons who are to take part in that last great act which is to follow, when your course has been finished, and the sands of time have run from

the hour-glass of your brief life. You will have to meet your God, no longer as your Saviour, but as your Judge. You will yourself be the chief accuser of your own guilty actions, of your misspent career. You will see the forms, you will hear the accusations of the Angel who guarded you, of the angels of the devil who tempted you, of those whom you have, perhaps, led into sin. If you be wise, you will prepare now to meet your God ; you will listen now to the reproaches of your conscience ; you will be docile to the guidance of your Angel ; you will be a source of edification to your companions, instead of being a scandal to them ; and thus you will meet the ordeal of that last and terrible day without fear, with holy, humble hope and unshaken trust in the mercy of your Father.

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.—THE TRIAL.

IT is but natural that after considering the persons who are to take part in this momentous trial, we should next direct our attention to that which is to be the matter of it, to the defence of the accused, and the summing-up of the Judge.

There is only one code of morality, and that is contained in the Gospel. It is by this code, therefore, that the soul will be tried. One by one its precepts and its prohibitions will be produced, and with them the soul's conduct during its day of life, will be rigorously compared. Its enactments ordered this virtuous action and that, and the soul has acted thus and thus. During the course of each day a multitude of thoughts have coursed through your brain ; every one of them will be searched into. You have spoken things in secret, in the presence of a few chosen friends ; each word will be weighed in the balance and its consequences taken into consideration. Your desires have gone forth to, and have fastened themselves upon, prohibited objects ; each of these will be scrutinised under the brilliant light of the sanctuary.

Not only for your own sins, but for the sins of others will you be called upon to give a strict account. Your actions have been done in the sight of others ; your conversation has fallen upon their ears ; your opinions and your principles

have been retailed to them. These are not barren things, falling into empty space, and perishing in the very act of their birth. They are like prolific germs, full of life and of energy. They sink into the minds of others ; they are fruitful in acts congenial to their nature. If good in themselves, they will produce good ; if evil, they may bring forth a heavy crop of wickedness. He that sows the seed, is the cause of the harvest ; and to him as the primal cause will that harvest be attributed, if he have foreseen even dimly the results that follow. What an array of ruined souls may, one day, stand in arms against you before the tribunal of God !

That bountiful Lord has not been niggard of His gifts to you. He has dowered you with a quick and vigorous intelligence ; with a ready and retentive memory ; with a strong will capable of compelling the wills of others. How have you used these gifts ? They were lent to you like so many talents, with which you were to trade till the great Master came to receive them back with usury from your hands. Your mind has, perhaps, been the servant of the devil, busily engaged in carrying out his designs ; your memory, in recalling and retaining ever present to your eyes that from which you should have turned away with horror ; your will, in executing and in causing others to execute his behests. Into the employment of these glorious faculties the all-seeing Judge will make a strict inquiry.

He allotted to you a certain portion of precious time, in which to accomplish the task for which you received the breath of life. You squandered those golden moments. Instead of working, you idled it away. Instead of employing it to advance in virtue, you consumed it in the service, the slavery of sin. Every moment of it will be passed in review, and the abuse of it will have to be accounted for.

But there were bestowed upon you gifts more precious still. The Holy Ghost breathed His inspirations into your ear, and you would not give heed ; He knocked at the door of your heart, by internal calls, and you closed it against Him ; He poured a flood of His heavenly light into your darkened soul, and you made haste to exclude it by curtaining yourself in

the folds of criminal indulgence. Each of these graces, and a thousand more which your memory will call back to you, were purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. What will you say for having discarded them, and for having made them of so little account ?

Then, there are the Sacraments which you have so often received ; confessions so badly prepared for, so hurriedly gone through, without contrition, without any purpose of amendment, perhaps without sincerity ; communions approached with lukewarmness, through mere custom, to keep up appearances, to do as others did ; communions received with doubtful dispositions, with grave qualms of conscience, sometimes, perhaps, in a state of undoubted guilt. Oh ! how severe will be God's judgment upon those who, like unclean animals, have trampled upon these precious pearls !

Surely, when put upon this most important trial, the culprit will have something to allege in excuse for his misspent life. When reproached, or when remonstrated with by friends, or by directors, excuses are not wanting, sheltered behind which the sinner defends himself against the reproaches made to him, and against the outcries of his own conscience. Let me set these excuses before your mind's eye, that after making them, you may see what their strength will be, if used for your defence. When boys are reproved by their confessors, and exhorted with all the energy and zeal with which God inspires directors to correct evil habits, they are accustomed to throw all the fault upon anybody but upon themselves. The most general excuse which they make is, that they have not the grace to curb their unruly wills and to correct their wicked lives. When conjured for God's sake, for the sake of their parents and their families to give up sin, they turn upon their counsellors and say : " I am doing only that which every one else does. I am living like the rest of the world." Then they will shift the blame from the want of grace, to their own passionate nature. " God has given me this unruly disposition. I cannot correct it. Besides, I am so weak when the whirlwind of temptation circles round me, that I am unable to withstand its force, and, therefore, I am driven before it as

a vessel is before the storm. Consider, also, the position in which I am placed. I live in the midst of those whose lives differ totally from the lives of men whom the world esteems to be pious. They are what is termed ‘worldly’. About most things they have ideas which are not the ideas of the virtuous, and their ways are not the ways of those who are religious. How am I to live in the midst of these and act in a manner so utterly at variance with their mode of life? I cannot endure their look of surprise; their ill-concealed scorn; their hints, their sarcastic remarks; and, therefore, I sail along in whatever direction the current of their lives may carry me. Take also into account the number of duties which fill up my time. The attention which they require, calls for all my powers of intelligence and of will. They are very exacting. They are very absorbing. On them my future depends. They crowd into my mind during all my religious exercises; they worry, they distract me; so that I give up the attempt to care for my soul’s welfare till my position, till my future is secure. In addition to all this, I am still very young. Youth is giddy, is without reflection, and allowance must be made for it. Youth is the time for pleasure, for enjoyment. It will be easier to be virtuous when age shall have sobered my spirit, and removed from the practice of virtue, all the difficulties that bristle in its path. Moreover, how is it possible for one who looks upon the brightness, the joyousness, the beauty, the alluring grace of creatures, to pluck out of his heart the love which they engender, and to fasten his affection upon what is so far off, so abstract, as are virtue and God?”

These are the excuses which generally are brought forward by sinners, to defend themselves against the strictures made upon their conduct by those who have but their interests and God’s interests at heart. Let us see of what avail they are likely to be, when made in the presence of the Judge.

Any one who is bold enough to say, that God does not give him grace sufficient to save his soul, is practically asserting that God wishes to condemn his soul to the flames of hell; for without the aid of grace, no one can win the bliss of heaven. But what says the infallible voice of Scripture? “God made

not death, neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living.”¹ His will is, not that the sinner should die, but that he should be converted and live.² He does not will that any should perish.³ Consequently, if such is His will, He must, of necessity, furnish all with that amount of grace by which they are able to accomplish His will. Therefore, the excuse of not having sufficient grace to overcome evil, falls to the ground. It is worthless as a means of defence.

To have lived like the majority of men, is one of the most paltry reasons that it is possible to bring forward. It is as much as to assert, that if an evil thing is done by the multitude, the weight of numbers takes away from it its immorality. Can any reasoning be more foolish? Did not Our Blessed Lord, in this respect, point out that the fact of the many walking in the way of sin, is a sure sign to warn us from their company? “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat”.⁴ The vast numbers that press along that slippery way, is a proof that it is not good to be with them.

As for the strong, passionate nature which you have received from God, remember that it is not so strong as to be beyond your control, unless you deliberately refuse to use the curb which God puts into your hand for the purpose of taming it, of keeping it within due bounds, and upon the narrow way. It has a will which must not be suffered to prevail over reason; it has tastes which must not be indulged; it has appetites which must not be gratified. There are objects which stir up all these depraved instincts of that nature, from these the curb will keep it at a distance; there is company which is for it as dangerous as a spark is for powder, into that company the curb will not suffer it to go; there are sights which speak to it through the eye, from these it must turn away; there are words which appeal to it through the ear, to these it must not be permitted to listen; there are persons who attract, as with a sort of magnetic influence,

¹ Wisd. i. 13.

² Ezech. xviii. 23.

³ 2 St. Peter iii. 9.

⁴ St. Matt. vii. 13.

the sensitive heart, from the company of these it must be rigidly withheld. If this curb were used, as God wishes that it should be used, it would effectually tame the most passionate nature, and make it obedient to the rational will. If the knowledge of your weakness were a practical one, instead of being a hindrance to you, it would aid you to escape from the blast of temptation's storm. But those who allege this excuse, are the very persons who add to their weakness by the gratification of passion.

Why, again, should you allow the dread of men to hurry you away into evil, when the fear of God is so powerful to brace up the will and make you despise their sneers and their scorn ?

A multiplicity of employments, and the absorbing nature of worldly pursuits, are certainly very engrossing. They lead the mind and the heart away from God. But, important as these are in their own place, they are not so important as salvation is. After all, that, and that only, is the really important business of life.

Youth is all that men declare it to be ; it is giddy, frivolous, passionate, fond of pleasure. But it is not the time for self-indulgence and for the gratification of passion. It is the time to lay hold of these passions, while they are still feeble, and crush out of them their vicious instincts. It is the time to accustom self to virtue ; for its practice becomes more difficult as man advances in years.

Created things, too, have their inherent beauty and attractiveness ; but these are transitory, and, therefore, should be despised when lasting good, and eternal beauty are presented to your view.

These excuses, then, will not stand the test of even human reason. How ridiculous will they seem before the throne of God ! The culprit will not dare to advance them. Struck dumb with the consciousness of guilt, seeing that all his excuses are frivolous and that they have vanished, he will not be able to say one word in his own defence. One by one his delinquencies will be set before his face. He will be made to see himself as God sees him, and his only words will be :

“Thou art just, O Lord ! and Thy judgment is right.” “When the Lord shall arise to judge, what shall I say? and when He shall question, what shall I answer ?”

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

BESIDES the particular judgment which follows immediately after death, there will be a general or universal judgment at the end of time. Of this there cannot be any doubt. In the Apostles' Creed we profess our belief in it. In the Creed drawn up by the Fathers in the Council of Nicæa, that dogma is confirmed ; and in that which is known as the Creed of St. Athanasius, it receives a further confirmation, and it is expressed in terms more explicit still. The sure basis on which our belief is built, is the teaching of Our Lord and of His Apostles. Jesus Himself describes all the dread pageantry of that last great assize, and says that the Angels, after the generations of men have been gathered together, shall separate the good from the bad, setting the good on His right hand, and the bad upon His left, to await the final sentence which shall call the just to eternal happiness and then shall consign the reprobate to eternal misery.¹ St. Peter and St. Paul speak of it in the Acts,² and, in the Apocalypse, St. John tells us how the whole scene of that last act in the history of man, was presented to his eyes. It is an act in which each of us shall play his part, and, therefore, it is but rational that we should carefully consider it in all its details, after first bringing before our minds the reasons which theologians assign for this second and apparently superfluous judgment.

The first of these reasons is, that God may make manifest to the eyes of all, the wisdom and the justice of His providence in the government of the world. At present, there are men who are rolling in wealth, while there are others who are perishing for want of a little bread ; some are afflicted with sickness, others never know what it is to have a day's ill health ; vice prospers, and virtue is in misfortune ; evil almost

¹ St. Matt. xxiv. 31.

² Acts x. 42 ; xvii. 31 ; xxiv. 25.

always gains the upper hand, while good has always to struggle for its existence. Men seeing this, and a multitude of other apparent anomalies, impiously maintain that the world is governed by chance ; and that if there is a God, He has no care for the world which He is reported to have made. God will, therefore, in that latter day, unveil before the eyes of His creatures, the mysterious reasons which have induced Him to permit this apparent disorder.

A second reason is, that there may be a public and solemn separation of the good from the bad. In this world they are often confounded ; the wicked pass off as virtuous and upright ; the virtuous either are not known, or if known are contemned. It is true that at death this separation has already been made. But who is aware of it ? The impious man is followed to his grave with the plaudits and the panegyrics of those who have abetted his wickedness ; a lying epitaph extols his virtues, and enrolls him among the just ; and for years, it may be for centuries afterwards, foolish men accept as gospel the lie that has been palmed off upon them. This injustice must be set right, and the whole world must know who are God's friends and who have been His enemies.

The just, during the days of their exile, have suffered every species of wrong at the hands of the wicked. They must be recompensed for their longsuffering, and their virtue vindicated before those who looked upon them as the malefactors of the world.

Moreover, the abominable crimes which the unjust have perpetrated under the cover of darkness and of secrecy, crimes which they were able skilfully to conceal from the eyes of even their intimate friends, these too must receive that measure of public odium which they merited and which they never received.

Again ; the bodies both of the just and of the unjust have had their share in the respective deeds of each. They also must have their share in the recompense which is owing to each. This recompense they did not receive either before or after death. It must now be awarded to them, and that award must be given to them when those bodies are once again made the tabernacles in which their souls are to dwell for ever.

These are some few of the reasons for which God has decreed that there shall be a general, public judgment at the last day.

Now that we have these reasons before our minds, let us examine the account which Jesus Christ has given of the events that shall precede, accompany, and follow that momentous occasion, when all the sons of Adam shall meet together for the first and the last time. Once, when coming out of the Temple, the Apostles drew His attention to the magnificence of its structure. Turning to them He said: "Do you see all these things? Amen I say to you, there shall not be left here a stone upon a stone that shall not be destroyed".¹ Being greatly disturbed at this prediction, they came to Him, as He shortly afterwards was sitting upon Mount Olivet, with the glorious Temple almost at His feet, and asked Him when this dreadful calamity should come to pass. Then Our Lord gave them a circumstantial account of all that should happen in the destruction of the city by the Romans. Passing naturally from the destruction of the Temple to the destruction of the world, and to His own second advent, He gave them a graphic description of the signs that shall precede that dreadful day. From the bosom of the glorious Church, planted by them and watered with their blood, proud men shall arise, full of their own conceits, and shall teach a doctrine in direct opposition to that delivered by them. From this teaching there will spring schisms, dividing and rending the seamless garment of their Saviour's truth. Many will run after these teachers. Their defection will lead to bloody persecutions. The magnates of the earth will oppress the faithful few. The falsehood propagated by this heretical spawn will, in due time, lead to rebellions, to wars, to fresh heresies, and to ever-varying forms and fashions of error. The nations of the earth, thus divided among themselves, will raise their hands against one another in fratricidal wars. Pestilence, ruin, desolation will stalk through the world, till at last the measure of men's iniquity being filled up, and that of God's patience and long-suffering being exhausted, the day of retribution and of vengeance will dawn.

¹ St. Matt. xxiv. 2.

But what a dawn ! The sun will rise in the murky heavens, shorn of his brilliant light. The moon will not show her face during the night. The stars will rush together in wild confusion, and seem to fall from the vault of heaven. The sea will rise in tempestuous wrath, and rush in upon the shores beyond which the power of God had hitherto kept it back. The earth will be shaken with convulsive throbs, and the fires raging within her cavernous depths will break forth and consume that which the earthquake shock has spared. Men, shuddering with horror at the frightful scenes of unutterable woe presented to their sight, will wither away with fear and expectation of what shall befall themselves, when amid the crash of the dissolving world they gaze upon the death-throes of their dearest friends. Then shall the wicked curse and blaspheme the name of God, Who thus afflicts them. In impotent wrath, they will lift up their hands against the heavens above them, and with horrible words of reviling and of scorn upon their lips, shall be swallowed in the general destruction, till not one of Adam's seed shall be left alive upon the ruined world.

These are some of the woes which shall precede the day of wrath, the day of darkness, of whirlwind, of calamity, of storm. Then shall follow the terrors of the great accounting day. At the blast of the Archangel's trumpet, the gates of hell shall roll back upon their hinges, and the souls which have there been confined amid its raging flames, shall swarm forth to inform those bodies which once were their tabernacles, and which, though reduced to dust, shall by the power of God, be built up again to be their habitations for ever. Then, also, shall heaven roll back her golden gates, and preceded by the glorious Cross, her countless legions shall march forth to take part in this last great act of justice. Surrounded by these angelic and saintly hosts the Son of Man, clothed with power and majesty and borne up upon the wings of the Cherubim, shall appear amid the clouds of heaven. All eyes shall see Him. All knees shall bend, either in willing adoration or in cowering terror. They shall look upon that thorn-crowned head, now resplendent with divine majesty ;

upon those pierced hands, now grasping the sceptre of omnipotence ; upon that scourge-seamed body, now flashing forth the brightness of eternal glory.

Before Him, gathered together in one vast throng, are all the generations of men that have peopled the earth since time first began to run its course. There they stand, mingled together now for the last time—the faithful followers who have lived and suffered with their glorious Leader, and the reprobate throng who have abandoned Him to follow the devil. At a word from the Sovereign Judge, the Angels shall go forth and separate the one from the other, as shepherds separate the goats from the sheep. Of one vast multitude, they will make two. The one, they will set upon the right hand of their Almighty Lord, the other, they will drive ignominiously to His left. The father will find himself on one side, the son on the other ; the daughter on one side, the mother on the other ; the friend on one side, the friend of his heart on the other ; those who in this world became fools for Christ's sake will find themselves amid the wise, and those who thought themselves wise here below, will find themselves reckoned among the fools of this world.

When this division has been made, and when there is naught but evil on the one hand, and naught but good upon the other, the books will be opened and the judgment will begin. Before the eyes of the whole human race and of the heavenly hosts the sins of the wicked will be made manifest. Oh ! what a revelation will that be ! How many who now pass for Saints, will then be found among the devils, and how many who are now despised as fools, as idiots, as bigots, as narrow-minded and superstitious, will be seen among the sons of God ? The deeds that have been done in darkness, will be dragged out into the noonday brightness ; the words that have been spoken in the ear, will be proclaimed abroad by the voices of the herald Angels ; every conscience will be laid bare ; every heart will be searched till its innermost recess is as manifest as the sun at noon. The good deeds of the just will ring in every ear. Their patience, their hidden

virtues, their mildness, their faith, their chastity, their modesty, will receive their meed of praise.

God will then call them to their everlasting reward, that the reprobate may see how the great King recompenses those whom He delights to honour. "Come," He will say to them, "come ye blessed of My Father, receive ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. You fed the hungry; you clothed the naked; you comforted the mourners; you visited the imprisoned; you buried the dead. You performed all these glorious acts of charity for My poor; and by performing them for these little ones, you performed them for Me."

Then He will turn to the reprobate, and pass upon them the sentence of their eternal doom, that the elect may behold and may glorify the justice of their Lord: "Depart," He will say to them, "depart from Me ye accursed into everlasting fire.¹ You did not feed the hungry; you gave not drink to the thirsty; you did not clothe the naked; you did not comfort the mourners; you did not visit the imprisoned; you did not bury the dead. By not performing these acts of charity towards My poor, you withheld them from Me." Thus shall end the drama of the world's history. That which follows is told in the few, brief words of the Gospel, words of eternal truth which cannot be gainsaid: "These shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just into life everlasting".²

Of these two eternities, one is awaiting us. The choice of it is, at present, in our own hands. It depends upon the life which we are leading. If it is good, then we are journeying towards the right hand of our Judge; if it is not, then we are swerving towards His left. Keep well before your eyes the thought of that last great day; of the judgment to come; of that which will precede, accompany, and follow it; and the salutary fear which it will engender in your heart will keep you on the right way, and enable you to win the crown which God has prepared for you.

¹ St. Matt. xxv. 41.

² St. Matt. xxv. 46.

HELL.

THE HISTORICAL ARGUMENT.¹

“THE wages of sin,” says St. Paul, “is death,” which God inflicted upon Adam and upon his descendants, as the penalty of that primal transgression, the prolific germ of all our woes. It is a penalty from which we recoil with horror; yet terrible as it is, it is not by any means so much to be dreaded as that “second death” with which mortal sin, unrepented of, is visited in the life beyond the grave. This “second death” is the punishment of hell. Christ Himself bids us fear this, and not a merely temporal death; for, from this latter we shall all rise unto a never-ending life. But hell is a living death, a state of existence in which the devils, and the souls of those who die in mortal sin are punished with unutterable tortures, which shall be inflicted upon their bodies also when these latter, at the general resurrection, shall be reunited to those souls which once informed them. Concerning this future state of misery, the Church has defined only two things which are to be believed under penalty of eternal damnation. These are its existence, and its eternal duration. These are points so hotly contested by many of those who are outside the pale of the Catholic Church, that it is necessary for you to have a firm and intelligent grasp of them. We will, therefore, set before you the proofs upon which the dogma rests, that your faith may be a rational one, and that the light which it pours into your soul may guide your steps and prevent you from ever being thrust into that dread prison-house.

In the first place, then, let us consider the historical proof of this dogma. As soon as we begin to search for it, the first fact that strikes us is that the doctrine of a future state, in which the virtuous are rewarded and the vicious severely punished, goes back to so early a date, that its origin is lost “in the twilight of fable”. We discover that it has always

¹ *L'Enfer*, par Mgr. De Ségur. In this little brochure, these various arguments are handled in a way so popular as to make them exceedingly useful in dealing with the adversaries of this dogma.

been held as an article of the creed of the human race ; we find it everywhere ; we see that it has been believed by all, by the Athenian as by the Roman, by the aborigines of America as by the cultured colonists of Africa, by the followers of Buddha in India as by the fire-worshippers of Persia. Those who first committed to writing, or at least embodied in their verses the histories of the various peoples of the earth, were the poets. In the writings of these, there is abundant evidence of what we say. You have only to look into your classics for a convincing proof. Virgil speaks of Theseus seated *for ever* upon his chair of woe, and of Tityus *eternally* devoured by a rapacious vulture.¹ Ovid tells us of the *perpetual pains* of Sisyphus,² while, in another way, Lucretius bears testimony to the current belief, by cynically sneering at it.³ If from the poets we pass to the grave philosophers of antiquity, we find them seriously discussing this momentous question, and giving to the belief of it their firm adherence. Plato, in his Gorgias, speaks of the *frightful and dolorous eternity* of the wicked ; Socrates, in the same dialogue, of the way taken by them after death, a way which leads them *far from the abode of the gods* ; and Celsus, speaking of the Christians, praises their belief that the impious will endure *eternal torments*.⁴

These testimonies to the belief in eternal punishment or hell, are modern, if compared with those which we may obtain from the Sacred Scriptures. At present, we regard these writings simply as historical documents, which in point of age and authority, surpass anything else that has fallen into the possession of man. From these pages, then, we have the most authentic record of the belief concerning this important dogma, current among men from the earliest times.

About 1500 years before the birth of Our divine Lord, Moses led the Israelites forth from the bondage of Egypt. During their march through the desert, the Lord gave to him the tables of stone, and bade him construct the Ark in which to hold them. From between the wings of the Cherubim which stood over that Ark, He spoke to him, and there, day

¹ *Aeneid*, vi.

² Ovid, *Metam.* iv.

³ *Lucret.*, lib. iii.

⁴ *Orig.*, *contra Celsum*.

by day, the priest burnt incense before the God of Israel. This converse of God with Moses, was a manifest sign of the great leader's authority and mission. But a perverse spirit of ambition stirred up three of the subordinate leaders of the people to rebel against him, and by rebelling against him, to sin against the Lord Who had set him up to be the prince of His people. In punishment of their grievous sin, the rest of the people were ordered by God to separate themselves from them, that they might not be involved in the destruction which He was about to bring upon them. Then, "the earth broke asunder under their feet, and opening her mouth devoured them with their tents and all their substance. And they went down alive into hell."¹ Referring to those who had by their wickedness provoked the anger of God, Moses, in the canticle which he composed before his death to be a perpetual memorial of the wonders wrought by God in the deliverance of His people, puts into the mouth of the Lord these significant words concerning the punishment of the wicked: "A fire is kindled in My wrath, and shall burn to the lowest hell".² This takes the record of belief in a future state of punishment back to an early date.

But earlier still is that left for us in the Book of Job. It is now a generally received opinion that this was written about 430 years before the era of Moses. In that magnificent poem, we find its author speaking of the wicked as "falling suddenly into hell," which he describes as "a land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth".³ Fully 1000 years before Christ, both David and Solomon speak of hell as of a dogma so firmly believed and so unquestioned as to need no proof. They speak of the sorrows of hell, and in their righteous indignation against the workers of iniquity, pray that "they may be turned into hell, may be brought down to hell, may go down alive into hell".⁴ Eight hundred years before the coming of Our Lord, the Prophet Isaias, apostrophising Lucifer, speaks of hell as the place of his torment: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O

¹ Num. xvi. 31, 33.

² Deut. xxxii. 22.

³ Job x. 22.

⁴ Ps. ix. 18; xxx. 18; liv. 16.

Lucifer! who didst rise in the morning? . . . Thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven . . . above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit.”¹ Elsewhere he mentions the fear and the trembling which invaded the hearts of the wicked, at the contemplation of the wrath of God against those who worked iniquity, and tauntingly asks them: “Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”² From his day down to the time of Our Lord, and from Our Lord’s day throughout all the centuries during which His Church has taught the world and done battle with the myriads of foes who have risen up against her, the doctrine on this point has been invariable, and its acceptance by the human race well-nigh unanimous.

From the testimonies of this belief already adduced, we see that it has been part of the creed of all peoples, of all times, and of all countries. Now to what source can we trace a belief which carries with it as credentials qualities such as these? We can assign to it no other origin than that primitive revelation made by God to the human family, and by them transmitted through the ages to their descendants. This accounts most satisfactorily for that general *consensus* of mankind in the belief that the wicked, who do not before death repent of their impiety, will be punished for all eternity in hell. In no other way can the universality, the antiquity, and the constant uniformity of their agreement upon this particular point be accounted for, especially if we remember that it is a point most displeasing to the perverse inclinations of man.

But it has been urged, and as a matter of fact it is even now put forward as an objection, that hell is the invention of rulers and of priests, who, by the terrors which it holds over the human conscience, wish to subject people to their sway. To this objection there are two answers. First, the doctrine of hell is not an invention, for the simple reason that it is not an isolated truth which has nothing to do with the system of

¹ Isaias xiv. 12, 15.

² Isaias xxxiii. 14.

our religion. It is an integral part of the revelation on which our faith is built. If you take it away from the other truths of our Christian belief, it is like removing the key-stone from an arch ; you destroy its symmetry and bring about its ruin. To deny the existence of hell, is to deny the necessity for redemption ; for we were redeemed by Christ, in order to be saved from the pit of hell, and to be made worthy to dwell in the courts of His Father's house. To deny redemption, is to deny the saving sacrifice of the Cross by which we were ransomed from the tyrannous grasp of the devil. Therefore, we must either accept this dogma, or, if we wish to be consistent, we must reject with it the whole system of Christianity. Consequently, this dogma cannot be an invention. It is part of God's revelation to man. Secondly, it cannot be an invention of the human intelligence, because the human mind can invent only that which it can comprehend. But the eternity of the pains of hell surpasses the comprehension of man. He cannot grasp it, though he can know the truth which that dogma enunciates. Therefore, he could not have invented it.

No ; hell is not the invention of priests or of princes. It is a truth revealed to us by God, a truth made known to man after his fall, and by him transmitted to his posterity, as a barrier against the inrush of that tide of passion which surged up within him after his defection from God. The records of history, even without the aid of revelation, disclose this to us, since they clearly indicate the existence of this belief among the men of all times, of all ages, and of all the various systems of religious belief which, from the very beginning, have claimed the adhesion of men.

HELL.

THE ARGUMENT FROM REASON.

THE historical argument, which we have examined in the preceding Lecture, has proved to us that belief in a future state of rewards and of punishments has existed at all times, in all places, and among all men. It is, therefore, one of those

truths of which the origin can be traced to no other source than to the fountain of all truth, Who revealed it to the first man to be a lamp to his feet and to the feet of his posterity, that, guided by its light, they might be led to the prize awarded to virtue, and escape the penalty inflicted upon vice. If it be a truth, as it undoubtedly is, we shall be able to find in our reason, arguments which will help to establish it, and give us a firmer grasp of it. Let us, at present, direct our attention to these, for they will show us that there is a hell, and that belief in it is not contrary to reason, as is so persistently affirmed by those who have dared to rebel against this universal belief of mankind.

If you take the trouble to use your intelligence and to reflect upon the origin and the destiny both of yourself and of the various things existing in the world around you, you will observe that all are ruled by sovereign laws. There are laws for the inanimate creation, there are laws for the animate, there are laws for the intelligent. The inanimate and the animate but unintelligent creation follow these laws by necessity. They cannot act against them. But man, the intelligent creature, has that power. He can either obey the laws of his being, particularly the laws which guide his moral being, or disobey them. For his will is free. It can choose whatever it pleases. If evil captivates its love, it can choose that ; if good, it can give its preference to and adhere to that. By choosing good, man follows the law of his being ; by choosing evil, he breaks it. Can he break it indefinitely ? That is to say, can he break it to such an extent as to make evil the law of his being, the end of his existence ? No ; that is impossible, for then he would have it in his power to make himself his own centre, the end of his own being. God cannot allow this. He cannot permit that anything else than Himself should be the end of His creature's existence. To allow that, would be to make for him a God other than Himself. Consequently, it is impossible for man to go on indefinitely breaking the law of his being. He is free, but he is not independent. If he is not independent, he is responsible to his Creator for his acts. Therefore, although he has the power to break the

law which ought to guide and regulate his being, yet for the breaking of that law there is a penalty, there must be one ; for if none existed, it would imply the cessation of the law. That penalty is punishment which follows guilt as a shadow follows substance.

Admitting, then, that there is a penalty attached to guilt, we naturally look to see where and when it is inflicted. In this present life, the crimes committed by men in the satisfaction of their perverse will, are never adequately punished. There are crimes which never emerge into the light, and of which human laws take no cognisance. The offences which these laws undertake to visit with chastisement, are chiefly those which affect human society ; but the secret pride, the selfishness, the bestial luxury, the crimes against nature, and the thousand other crimes perpetrated within the sanctuary of conscience, of the injustice of which only God's eye is witness, these come not under the lash of human justice. Far from being punished; iniquity, as a rule, is seated in the high places of the earth. Fortune seems to smile upon it, and to pour out at its feet all the wealth, the glory, and the homage which man can bestow. Public opinion very often, instead of branding it with infamy, gives to it the plaudits of its voice and the consecration of its approval. Conscience, indeed, may in the early stages of guilt savagely stab it with the envenomed point of its tongue ; but use or habit soon draws over the most tender, sensitive soul, an integument which naught can penetrate but the hand of an avenging God. Therefore, as a rule, crime goes unpunished and iniquity is exalted, and lives in prosperity during the days of this mortal life ; while virtue is often unrecognised, or, if recognised, is forced to hide its head, by the followers and worshippers of Mammon. Therefore, there must be in the next life a penalty inflicted upon crime. That penalty is hell.¹

If we consult our reason, such is the conclusion at which we arrive concerning the existence of hell. For, even without

¹ See Nicolas, *Études Phil.*, tom. ii., chap. viii., where all this subject is admirably treated.

the aid of revelation our reason convinces us, that there is a God, and that He is the wise governor of the whole human race. As God and as Supreme Ruler, it is His duty, if in speaking of Him we may use such a word, to punish those who transgress His laws, and not merely to threaten them with a punishment which never arrives. This is so essential an idea of God, that if crime were not punished that fact would argue one of these two things, either that God does not exist, or that if He does, He is not the wise ruler we imagine Him to be. It would commit us to the belief that Our good Father is equally indifferent whether we are given up to the slavery of vice, or are devoted to the cultivation of virtue. It would force us to proclaim that He has no regard whatever for justice, because He winks at the delinquencies of the impious, and suffers them to go unpunished. No one who wishes to be ranked as a follower of Our Lord, would for a moment entertain about God ideas so utterly abominable. Therefore, by the force of his reason, man is compelled to admit the existence in the next life of a penalty for crime.

To do this is easy enough. That against which reason revolts, is that this punishment should be eternal. Against this men cry out and agitate themselves, and proclaim it to be in opposition to reason, and, therefore, impossible. Now although by answering this objection here we shall be anticipating a part of this dogma, namely its eternal duration, yet because it will be a kind of preparation for what we shall say in its due place, we will here endeavour to reply to it in such a way as will be best within your comprehension. In opposition to the objection of those who exclaim against the eternity of the punishment of hell, and say that it is against reason, we say that it is not against, or contrary to reason, but beyond or above reason. We cannot understand the *how* or the mode of this eternity, but we can know and understand the *fact* of its eternity, just as we can grasp the fact of the Trinity, or of any other Christian mystery. Hence, admitting the fact, we can see at least the congruity of this eternal punishment, if we bear in mind the malice of sin. Sin is a revolt from God. It is an act of high treason against Him. Its

aim, if such a thing were possible, is the overthrow of God. Being an offence against an infinite personality, it becomes in a certain sense infinite, that is to say, it is comparatively infinite. Consequently, it deserves a punishment which is comparatively infinite, or, in other words, a punishment which being without end, is infinite in duration.

Again; the eternity of punishment is not contrary to reason if we regard it with respect to the manifestation of one of God's attributes. We make no objection whatever to an eternal manifestation of His goodness. That does not shock our reason. Against that there is no outcry. Why then should there be any difficulty in admitting the manifestation of another of His attributes which is equal to that of His goodness? If the one is against reason, so also must the other be. There is no argument to show or to prove to us that there should not be an eternal manifestation of God's vindictive justice, just as there is a manifestation of His retributive justice in the case of the blessed.

It is not against reason, if we regard the dogma with respect to man's soul. That soul of his is essentially immortal, and, therefore, it could not be restrained from following its own perverse desires by a barrier which would impose upon it a merely temporary restraint. No curb, except one that like itself will endure for ever, can keep it within bounds. Hence, the necessity for an eternal sanction for the divine law, in the guise of a never-ending penalty for the transgression of it. A moment's reflection will serve to confirm us in this conclusion. For, if belief in eternal punishment is not a deterrent powerful enough to keep man from plunging into the fatal vortex of sin, to what wild excesses would he go, if only the rotten thread of a temporary chastisement hung between him and the gratification of his passion?

No; the doctrine of eternal punishment is not against reason, but rather it is consonant, it is in harmony, with it. Man sees that there must be beyond the grave a punishment for the iniquity which is not adequately punished in this world, and which, generally speaking, altogether, or at least in great measure, escapes the lash of even human justice. It tells him

that though he is free, he is not independent ; and if not independent, that he is responsible to God for his conduct. Hence, for the transgression of the law imposed on man by God, there is and there must be a penalty which, not being fully exacted here, is fully exacted in the next life, unless repentance blots out the debt contracted. Therefore, reason joins itself with history and gives to us its testimony, that there is a hell.

THE PAINS OF HELL.

THE PAIN OF LOSS.

OUR reason, and the testimony of the Holy Scripture have enabled us to get a firm grasp of the dogma of future punishment. We know that hell exists, and that it is eternal, in the sense of being duration without end. It is natural, therefore, that we should wish to enlarge the circle of our knowledge upon this particular point, by studying the nature of the punishment inflicted in that eternal hell. The outlines of this are given in the words with which the great Judge will consign the reprobate to their doom ; for like every judge, His sentence must specify the character of the penalty with which the criminal's offences are visited. Turning to the wicked, on the conclusion of that last dread assize, He will say to them : “ Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire ”. By the word “ depart,” He signifies their total separation from Himself, a separation in which consists the pain of damnation or loss ; by the word “ fire,” He indicates the pain of sense ; and by the word “ everlasting,” He impresses upon us the eternal duration both of the separation and of the sensible pain.

At present, we will confine our attention to the consideration of the pain of damnation, or of loss, as it is generally called.

In order to obtain at least some shadowy notion of the pain of this privation of God, we must bear in mind that He has created us for Himself. He has given to us an intelligence,

that we may know Him ; a will, that we may choose Him and adhere to Him ; and a heart, that we may love Him. To cleave to, and to be indissolubly united with Him, is as essentially an end or purpose of our being, as it is essentially of the nature of a heavy body to fall to the earth, or of a flame to ascend, or of a river to flow onwards from its source. As a stone when flung into the air, or a flame when drawn downwards, or a river when checked in its course, is in a state of violence, opposed to its nature, so a soul that is withheld from the knowledge, the love, and the union with God, must be in a state of torture, of violence which will cause it unutterable pain. In the present life, this privation of God does not cause the keen torture which it naturally would generate. For, there are so many things to absorb the attention, to occupy the memory, to amuse the intelligence, to attract the affections and the love of the heart, that they distract and divert the soul from that which is the true, the only object of its existence. Though it has eyes, it sees not ; though it has ears, it hears not ; and though it has a heart, it loves not that which alone is worthy of its love.

But when death comes, and sweeps away all these earthly things which like a curtain hang between the soul and God, then it will see Him, and see Him only. All else will have vanished "like the baseless fabric of a vision". It will be alone, —with Him alone. It will see that it was made for Him and for nothing else. All the fountains of energy contained in the vast deep of its immortal being, will burst up and with impetuous violence cause it to rush to the embrace of its God, to bury itself in Him, the centre of its being. But defiled as it is with sin, it cannot do so. Therefore, having once looked upon the entrancing beauty of that heavenly vision, its eyes will be darkened, it will see no more. Its arms will clasp the empty air ; its heart will find no object for its love ; its intelligence no pleasant matter for its cogitations. It will be with it as with a monarch, who, from the midst of a brilliant court, should drop to the centre of the earth. In the twinkling of an eye all that he loved, all that occupied him, all that invested him with honour, is gone. In its stead darkness, solitude, despair !

Picture to yourself this as happening to the soul. It has lost all that to which it cleaved in this world. It has seen Him Whom it was created to love, to Whom it was destined to cleave for all eternity. Rushing to His embrace, it has by Him been violently hurled back upon itself. In its intelligence there is ringing that terrible sentence: "Depart from Me . . . I know you not!" Oh! who shall be able rightly to estimate the bitterness of that separation, adequately to fathom the depth of that loss! "Show me the man," says St. Augustine, "who has loved, and he will understand what I say." Ask him who has given the love of his heart to some creature frail and perishable as himself. Behold him when his love is rejected, when the being whom he literally worships, turns away from him with a pity that is half scornful. Witness his agony, his despair, his rage! It is vain to tell him that he is derided, befooled, despised. He still will love, and despise himself for loving that which he would like to hate. Such a one as this will understand, at least in some inadequate way, what it is to have been separated from and to have lost God. "Hell," says St. John Chrysostom, "is an intolerable torture; but if we were to join together a thousand hells, their torment would be a mere nothing compared with the torment endured by him who has lost God, who is hateful to Christ, who has heard from Him those dreadful words: 'I know you not'."¹

In another place he says: "If every one pities a man who is exiled from his fatherland, or a man who loses his inheritance, with what floods of tears ought we to weep over him who has lost all the good things that are stored up in the kingdom of God? Or rather, his is a loss not to be deplored with tears; for we weep only over him who, through no fault of his, has met with misfortune. But when any one, of his own free will, has given himself up to vice, he is worthy not of tears, but of lamentations and loud wailings. If the whole world with its rocks, its woods, its beasts and its birds were to join with us in our sorrow, their lamentations would not equal

¹ Hom. 23, in Matt., n. 8.

the loss which he thereby sustains. For he loses God, and that loss begun here, is but too often consummated in eternity.”¹

Such are the words of a Saint, contemplating with trembling awe that which is the greatest torture of hell. Yet terrible as that loss is in itself, it is rendered more terrible still by two circumstances which the reprobate can never cease to forget. These are the ever-present thought of their loss, and the ever-present consciousness that that loss has been occasioned by their own fault. If they could only now and then forget their loss! If, as in this world, the crushing weight of the blow would from time to time stun them, and thus allow them to be unconscious of their calamity, their lot, though horrible in the extreme, would not be so utterly unendurable. But never, through the endless ages of eternity, will that thought be absent from their minds. Without cessation throughout the long night of perpetual darkness, they will repeat to themselves: “Where is my God? I have lost my God.” Hence, at every instant of that never-ending duration, they will feel the full weight of their eternal loss. Consequently, at every instant they will suffer the full weight of eternal woe. That which has past, and that which is coming, and that which actually is, are all concentrated in one point. If you wish for an image of this, take a ball of lead, and let it rest upon the back of your hand. It touches you but in one point; yet in that one point you feel its full weight. So it is with the pain of loss. It is an eternal pain; but the knowledge that it is eternal, constitutes the pain of eternity.

Simultaneous with this appalling thought, is the ever-present consciousness that this irreparable loss has been caused by their own fault. “I might have been saved, and I am lost,” is the idea branded on their intelligence, as with letters of fire. From the depth of that eternity which has engulfed them, they will look back upon the mere speck of time during which they lived in the world. What will they discern in that lightning flash called “time” which was given to them?

¹ Hom. 23, in Epist. ad Heb.

Naught but priceless graces and favours. The lines had fallen for them in goodly places. They were born in the bosom of a good Christian and Catholic family. They had before their eyes, from their earliest years, the best of examples. They were further blessed with an excellent education. They were taken, as it were, out of the world, and, during the critical years of their youth, set in the very sanctuary of God. Day by day the knowledge of God and the love of virtue were instilled into their minds. The holy Sacraments were at their disposal and were applied to them to meet all their spiritual needs. Everything that God, in His divine justice, could do for them, without forcing their wills, was done. But with what result? The devil held out to them a few momentary gratifications, and to taste of these poisoned pleasures, they turned their backs upon God. They abused His graces. They profaned His sanctuary. The hedge which God had drawn around them, they maliciously broke down; the tower which He built to protect them, they took care to overthrow; the wine-press which He dug to refresh them, they utterly ruined. Their destruction is the work of their own hands.

What would it have cost them to be now in the kingdom of God, standing before His glorious throne, entranced and inebriated with the beauty and the plenty of His house? A little self-restraint. A little courage. A little pain, patiently endured for a few months till good habits were firmly rooted in the soul. Then the path to heaven would have been smooth, level, easy of ascent; the enemies who beset it, easily conquered; the obstacles which they would throw in the way, without difficulty removed. Has it cost them nothing to come to the abyss in which they now are, and in which they will be for ever? They had no peace in their evil courses. Happiness fled from them. They became the slaves of the devil, the slaves of their own flesh, and of its brutish passions. They lost their reputation. They lost their health. They at last, perhaps, lost their very life through the excesses of their vicious courses.

Then they were cast into the bottomless pit. There, oppressed with the loss of God, the idea of that loss ever present

to their minds, the consciousness that it was occasioned by their own fault never for an instant absent from their thoughts, they lament, when it is too late, their unutterable folly. "We fools, . . ." they exclaim, "have erred from the way of truth, the light of justice hath not shined upon us, the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity, . . . but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us, or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All these things are passed away as a shadow. . . . So we also being born, forthwith ceased to be; and have been able to show no mark of virtue, but are consumed in our wickedness." Such are the expressions of unavailing sorrow which break from their lips, unavailing, because spoken in hell: "Talia in inferno dixerunt hi qui peccaverunt—Such things as these the sinners said in hell".¹

HELL.

THE PAIN OF SENSE.

BESIDES the pain of loss, which constitutes the chief torment of hell, there are many others of which the Scriptures make mention. In Job, "the darkness and the mist" which overshadow that abode of misery, are spoken of. St. Peter says that for its wretched inhabitants, "the mist of darkness is reserved". This mist is termed by St. Jude, "the storm of darkness"; and Our Lord speaking of those who are condemned to it, says: "They shall be cast into the exterior darkness". To the horror of this palpable obscurity, add the company of the wicked, the gnawing pangs of hunger, a burning thirst never to be slaked by even one drop of water, the stench of the prison-house, the tooth of the worm that dieth not, and the torture of the fire that shall never be extinguished, and you will have some faint notion of the picture presented to us by the Inspired Word of God, of that region of agony over which the justice of the Almighty reigns supreme. But

¹ Wisd. v. 6, 14.

among the torments of hell, that of which there is most frequent mention, is the torture of fire. Fire is the instrument by which sin is chastised.

Is it a real, corporeal fire, which by a real action, as the instrument of God's justice, tortures the reprobate, or is it only a metaphorical fire, acting spiritually, and torturing only by the apprehension of the mind? That which has given rise to the doubt implied by this question, is the fact that the fire of hell acts not only on the spiritual substance of the apostate angels, and the souls of the damned who share their punishment, but, that after the resurrection, it will act also on the bodies which shall be then restored to these souls. How, then, it is asked, is it possible for a material fire to touch a spiritual substance? The answer seems to be: "It is impossible". It seemed so to Origen, who is said to have been the first to deny the material nature of the fire of hell. It seemed so to Calvin, to Beza, and to many of the innovators of the sixteenth century. It seems so to many at the present day. They deny not only the existence of the fire of hell, but the existence of hell itself.

In this, as in every doctrinal difficulty, we must look to see what is the mind of the Church. If we follow that, we cannot err. Now, although the Church has issued no definitive decree, although she does not make it an article of our holy faith that the fire of hell is a material fire, yet her mind, as seen in her teaching, a teaching drawn from sources of revelation, is that the fire of hell is a true and material fire, not a metaphorical one; a fire which, after the resurrection, will torture not only the bodies of the damned, but which now actually tortures also their souls, and the devils who are in the same punishment.

Let us, then, study the reasons which have led the Church to adhere to this doctrine, so distasteful, so revolting to the self-will and pride of fallen man.

Whenever in the Old or in the New Testament the sensible punishment of the damned is spoken of, the instrument of it is invariably said to be *fire*. Job, Isaias, Malachias, Jeremias, and the author of Ecclesiasticus threaten sinners with it. The Prophet David tells them in his Psalms, "that fire and

brimstone . . . shall be the portion of their cup" ; that in the time of His anger, God shall make them as an oven of fire ; that the fire shall devour them ; and that He will cast them into it. Our Lord when speaking of their punishment, calls it inextinguishable fire, everlasting fire, a furnace of fire prepared for the devil and his angels. In these, and in all similar passages, the Church holds that the word "*fire*," is to be taken in its proper, and not in its metaphorical sense. Consequently, her teaching is that the fire of hell is a material fire. But why need the word *fire* be taken in its natural, proper meaning ? Because our common sense tells us, that there must be some limit to these metaphorical interpretations of Holy Writ, otherwise we should soon cease to have a Bible. The limit which the Church puts, is a very rational one. She requires reasonable *proof* that a metaphorical interpretation is called for, before she will admit it. No one is allowed to presume, or to take it for granted that any such figurative meaning must be attributed to the text. For, just as among men it is not usual, but extraordinary, to use words in their metaphorical sense, so also in Scripture the words are generally employed in their ordinary, and not in their extraordinary, or metaphorical meaning. Therefore, before we can accept the interpretation of those who would have it that the word *fire* is to be taken in a spiritual sense, we must have some reason to prove that they have warrant for what they assert. Thus far, however, they have been able to discover no proof that will convince an impartial witness, that a metaphorical interpretation is called for. On the contrary, all things conspire to show that the word "*fire*," when applied to the torment of hell, must be taken in its obvious, proper meaning. For, if ever there are occasions when men,—and, therefore, with much greater reason when God,—should speak plainly and utterly discard all figurative, metaphorical language, it is when they make laws, or appoint for those laws a sanction, or pass sentence on those who transgress them. Now, if you take notice, you will find that whenever in the Sacred Scripture there is question of matters of this nature, as for instance in stating the sentence to be passed upon the reprobate, the word used

in all the texts is *fire*. Consequently, the word is to be understood in its usual, general signification.

If we wish for a confirmation of this conclusion, we cannot find a better one than that which may be gathered from a consideration of the properties and the effects which the Sacred Text attributes to this fire. These are of such a nature, that they can be predicated only of real, and not of metaphorical fire. This fire is called “a lake, an oven, a flame”; smoke is said “to rise from it”; it is represented as “burning,” as breaking out into “flames,” as a “devouring fire,” “a fire that is not extinguished,” a fire which enwraps and sets ablaze, as so much stubble, the impious who are cast into it. Properties such as these can belong only to real fire.

If you say: “May not these properties attributed to the fire, be metaphorical, just as the fire itself is?” Our answer is, no; for if the Sacred Scripture occasionally does inculcate in metaphorical language some point of doctrine, its general custom is to impress it on the people also in terms which retain their proper meaning. But with respect to the fire of hell, there is no other language used, than that in which the notion is conveyed to our minds, that its punishment is material fire. Moreover, this fire is presented to us as something subsistent, and altogether distinct from the beings who are tortured by it; for it is declared by Jesus Christ to have been prepared by God, from the very beginning of the world; the reprobate are represented as “cast into it”; and a determinate place or locality is assigned to it. If any one will venture seriously to say that all these circumstances may be asserted of sadness, of remorse of conscience, and the rest, let him not be surprised if his statements are received with an incredulous smile.

As if to exclude the possibility of its properties being taken in a figurative sense, the fire of hell is said by Our Lord¹ to torture not only the spirits, but the bodies of men. Hence, the celebrated Estius said, that any one who explains the torment of fire as being the sting of conscience, is beside

¹ St. Matt. x. 28.

himself. Such an interpretation might hold good of the soul ; "but how," he asks, "can the body be cast into that fire. Therefore, we must understand that in this passage, Jesus Christ speaks of a material hell in which the bodies of the reprobate are punished."¹ We see, then, that whenever the Scripture speaks of this most grave matter, it most frequently makes mention of fire, and attributes to that fire, certain properties and effects which can belong only to real fire. Nowhere does it either implicitly, or explicitly say, or even obscurely hint at, a metaphorical sense in which this word may be taken, when predicated of hell. Hence, the meaning most commonly attached to it in the Church, is that of a real, corporeal fire, and not of a metaphorical one. If she were deceived upon this point, and the fire of hell were only a figurative, metaphorical fire, the error which she has spread throughout the world would be attributable to God ; for in the Sacred Scripture, He has made use of modes of expression which most clearly point to a material, real, corporeal fire. Nor is there anything unlikely in this conclusion, if we wish to argue from analogy. For, in Holy Writ, we find several instances in which God has, by means of fire, punished the sins of men. For the wickedness of the Cities of the Plain, He rained down upon them a deluge of fire ; for irreverently offering in their censers unhallowed fire, He flashed out fire upon Nadab and Abiu, and slew them as they stood before the altar ; at the word of His Prophet Elias, He struck with fire from heaven, and destroyed the messengers whom the King of Samaria sent to apprehend the man of God. In each of these instances, it is certain that the instrument employed to avenge the insult offered to Him by sinners, was true, real fire. Why, then, all this outcry against the Church for teaching, though not as an article of faith, that the fire of hell is a real, material fire ; that it is the instrument, or rather we might call it, the prison-house in which He says that sinners will be punished ? He declares that He will thrust them into fire. If, then, He has already employed material fire as the

¹ Estius, *loc. cit.*, 4 *Distinct.*

instrument of His justice against sinners, there is no reason to deny that He will choose it as the instrument with which to punish them for all eternity, especially as He Himself has declared that the sentence of the Judge will be: “Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire”.

THE FIRE OF HELL.

TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS.

BEFORE calling the Fathers of the Church to give their testimony concerning the material fire of hell, there are two objections which it will be well to answer. It is asserted by some, that the subject matter on which the fire is said to act, most effectually hinders us from understanding the word *fire*, in its ordinary signification, and calls for a metaphorical interpretation. For, the subject matter are spiritual substances, to wit, the souls of men. On these souls, it seems impossible that a material agent, such as fire is, should be able to act, and, consequently, we are forced to take the word in its figurative meaning.

To this we reply, such would undoubtedly be our only alternative, if reason could prove to demonstration that a spiritual substance cannot, in any way, be tormented by fire. But this, reason is unable to do, and, therefore, we are free to follow the plain, straightforward meaning of the Sacred Text.

Besides, though the subject matter on which the fire is said to act are spiritual substances, that fact does not prevent us from concluding that the fire to which, on the last day, the Judge shall consign the reprobate, will torment their bodies. But that same fire, material as it undoubtedly must be, thus to act upon bodies, nevertheless is able to torment the devils; for God says it was prepared for their special punishment. The devils, however, are spiritual substances, as all admit, and, therefore, we must conclude that if a material fire can torment the devils, it can torment also the spiritual substance of the human soul.

Another circumstance which seems to call for a figurative

interpretation of the word “fire,” is the fact that when speaking of the sensible punishment of the damned, the Scripture makes it consist in two things,—in the worm that dieth not, and in the fire that shall not be extinguished. Now, all admit that the *worm* is merely a figurative expression to denote remorse of conscience ; and it is argued, with an appearance of likelihood, that the word *fire* must also be taken, not in its literal, but in its metaphorical sense. Though this inference seems to be just, yet it does not logically follow, from the parity instituted between the words *worm* and *fire*, that because the one is figurative, therefore that the other also must be figurative. There are several very good reasons why this should not be. One of these reasons is, that Our Lord has spoken of the *fire*, separately, as a something standing apart from the *worm* ; and the Scripture also does the same in many passages which have already been cited. A second reason is, that for this literal interpretation we have the *consensus* of the Fathers, of theologians, and of the Church ; whereas no such *consensus* can be found concerning the interpretation of the word *worm*. A third reason is, that this word *worm*, calls for a metaphorical meaning, much more than the word *fire*. For, a real, corporeal worm cannot with its teeth gnaw at and, by so doing, torture a spiritual substance ; inasmuch as pain of this kind is caused in a material being, by the vital action of the worm which withdraws something from that being. But of this withdrawal or division, a spiritual substance, such as the soul is, is incapable. Therefore, the word *fire* cannot, like the word *worm*, be taken in a metaphorical sense, the great difference between them being, that fire acts upon substances with a merely intrinsic action, whereas the worm acts upon them by one that is extrinsic.

Having answered these objections against the literal interpretation of the word *fire*, as meaning a something material and not spiritual or figurative, let us now see what evidence towards establishing this truth, the Fathers of the Church can give. If we consult the Council of Trent as to the method by which the Sacred Scripture is to be interpreted, we find that it lays down as a canon for discovering the genuine meaning

of Holy Writ upon any given point, “the unanimous *consensus* or agreement of the Fathers”. On turning to their writings, we discover that they have constantly understood what the Sacred Books have said about the fire of hell, in its proper and not in its metaphorical meaning. Consequently, they believed that the fire of hell is a material fire. For, throughout their voluminous works, they speak about that fire in precisely the same way as the Scripture does, and attribute to it the same effects and the same properties that are attributed to it by these Inspired Books. Therefore, the same arguments that established for us the fact that these Books speak of a material, not of a metaphorical fire, will prove for us that the Fathers of the Church regarded the fire by which the reprobate are punished in hell, as a material, and not as a figurative fire. When writing on this subject of hell, we notice in their works three things: first, they compare the fire of that abode of misery with the fire of this world, and, while commenting upon the difference between the two, they do not deny that both are material; secondly, they explicitly teach that the fire of hell is a real, corporeal fire; thirdly, they speak of it, without distinction, as torturing after the general resurrection the bodies of the damned and the spiritual substances of the devils. From these facts, then, it is evident what their belief and their teaching were. But in order to impress these upon your mind, it will be best that you should see them in their own words.

St. Gregory of Nyssa says: “Although some of the torments that are felt in that world of woe, are known to us by names with which we are familiar, yet there is between the pains of that world and of this, no slight difference. For, when in listening to a discourse upon hell, you hear the word *fire*, you understand that there is in that fire a something different from that which is in our fire; that there is added to it a something which is not in ours. For, the fire of hell cannot be extinguished; but there are many things which are able to stifle our fire. Great, then, is the difference between the fire that can be extinguished, and that which cannot be extinguished.”¹

¹ In. *Orat. Mag. Catechis.*, cap. 40.

St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the Epistle to the Romans, says: "If you laugh, and if you are incredulous when you hear the word 'hell,' just call to mind the fire which rained down upon Sodom! In that you may see, even in this present life, an image of hell."¹

St. Augustine explicitly teaches that the fire of hell is a material fire, when he says: "Most likely the word *fire* is employed in its proper signification when used with reference to the body; and the word *worm*, in its figurative sense when used with reference to the soul".² Two chapters farther on, in the same work from which these words are quoted, he says: "Why may we not say that even incorporeal spirits may, in wonderful but true ways, be tortured by the pain of corporeal fire, if our own spiritual substances, which are themselves incorporeal, both now may be enclosed in corporeal members, and then will be indissolubly bound in the chains of their own bodies? Therefore, the spirits of the devils will adhere to corporeal flames, to be tortured by them."

In the twenty-eighth chapter of the fourth book of his *Dialogues*, St. Gregory the Great writes: "As beatitude fills the souls of the elect with joy, so also we must believe that, from the day of their death, fire burns the reprobate". Thereupon Peter his deacon asks: "How must we believe that a corporeal fire can hold an incorporeal thing?" In the next chapter, following up this question, he pointedly asks his master: "Is the fire of hell corporeal?" To this St. Gregory replies: "I have no doubt in saying that it is corporeal".

St. Jerome, writing to Avitus,³ says that among the errors of Origen, errors most carefully to be avoided, is that which teaches that the fire of hell does not punish by means of tortures, but by the stings of conscience; and in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians,⁴ he places among opinions that are vain, "the teaching of men who say that for the punishment of sin, there will be no external torture, but that sin itself and the consciousness of sin are the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not extinguished."

¹ Hom. 4, no. 3.

³ Epist. 124.

² *De Civ. Dei*, lib. 20, cap. 22.

⁴ Cap. v.

Hugo of St. Victor, in his second book on the Sacraments, says : "By the authority of Holy Writ and by the testimony of Catholic truth, it is most clearly proved that, even now, souls, before being united with their bodies, are tortured by corporeal or material fire."

These quotations might be indefinitely increased, but, since they all tend to prove belief in the material nature of the fire of hell, we will not weary you by a repetition of the same idea. But before concluding this Lecture, we must notice an assertion of Dom Calmet's,¹ an assertion which is not borne out by facts. He says, that among the Greek Fathers the common opinion was that the word "fire," when predicated of hell, is used in a metaphorical sense. The very opposite is proved by the testimony of the Fathers whom he cites to confirm his statement. The authority which he adduces from the Council of Florence, is not to the point; for the Fathers of that Council all agreed in holding, that the fire of hell is material; their only doubt was concerning the fire of Purgatory. The text from St. Jerome, sometimes cited to prove that he held "a metaphorical fire," is simply a quotation from Origen, put forward as the opinion of that celebrated man; that drawn from St. Augustine, was afterwards retracted by him; St. Gregory of Nyssa held that at least the bodies of the damned are to be cast into a pool of real, material fire; while the words of St. Gregory the Great, cited from his commentary upon the fifteenth chapter of Job, are generally supposed to be a mistake of the copyist, who wrote *incorporeal* for corporeal, as most of the manuscripts of his work have this latter reading.

Hence, from what we have seen, we now know that the *consensus* among the Fathers concerning the material nature of the fire of hell, is unanimous. This is the interpretation put by them upon the texts of Scripture which mention this torture of the reprobate. Therefore, we must conclude that the Sacred Text, when speaking of this penalty attached to sins that are not repented of, wishes us to take the word "fire" in its literal meaning, as a material agent of the justice of God.

¹ *In Eccl., vii. 19.*

THE FIRE OF HELL.

TESTIMONY OF THEOLOGIANS.

THE great theologians, whose works may be said to be the voice of the Church, inasmuch as by never condemning their teaching the Church assents to and considers their doctrine her own, must likewise give their testimony to the belief of the Catholic Church concerning the material nature of that instrument of God's justice, the fire of hell. From the fact that such is the common teaching of the Church, Estius¹ declares that it must not be resisted. Toletus² affirms that to assert the opposite, would be an error. In this opinion he is joined by Bannez. Petavius assigns as a reason why the Church has, upon this point, issued no definite decree, the wonderful unanimity of all theologians; and the great Suarez³ writing upon this subject declares, that the doctrine of a material fire in hell has for its defence, the common *consensus* of theologians, the common feeling of the Church, and the common feeling of Catholics. Therefore, it is not to be wondered at that when Catharini published his views about the *spiritual* nature of the fire of hell, his doctrine called forth a most vigorous protest from all quarters, some branding it as heretical, others as bordering upon heresy, and others as at least erroneous and very rash. As it would be beyond measure wearisome for you to read through their individual testimony to this Catholic truth, we think that we shall be able to lay before you what is their mind concerning it, if we answer for you the three following questions:—

- (1) In what way, according to them, does the fire of hell differ from the fire of which we make use in this world?
- (2) In what way is it impossible for the fire of hell to torment a spiritual substance?
- (3) In what way may it cause torment to the damned?

With regard to the first question, take notice that it is quite a different one from the question about the materiality

¹ 4 Dist. 44.

² In *quaes.* 64, Art. 3.

³ *De Angel.*, lib. 8, cap. 12.

and the reality of the fire ; the answer to this question will point out to us what their views are respecting its intimate nature and its special properties. In replying to it, therefore, we say, that while maintaining and teaching its real material nature, they always are careful to explain the many ways in which that avenging agent fire differs from the fire with which we are in this world familiar. Of this latter, the principal efficient cause is God, as the author and governor of nature ; but of the fire of hell He is the author, as judge and avenger of sin. The material fire of this world is ignited and fed by certain chemical operations, with which every one is well acquainted ; but the fire of hell is set in motion and preserved by the wrath of God. Our present fire acts upon our souls, but through the medium of the body ; the fire of hell, however, without any intermediary whatever, acts directly upon the soul. Here below, we have many materials by which our fire may be extinguished ; but the fire of hell can never be extinguished. A bright, cheerful light is generated by our fire ; but from the fire of hell there goes forth naught but darkness. The fire of this world dissolves and consumes that with which it comes in contact ; the fire of the other world burns, but it does not destroy. The ardour of our fire may be diminished, and its life be quite extinguished ; but the fire of hell, being sustained and fed by the power of God, will baffle all attempts to control its activity, or to stamp out its vitality. Though that fire is a material one, yet the pain which it inflicts is not material, but may be said to be spiritual ; "for, everything that is received, as pain is by the reprobate, is received according to the mode or fashion of the recipient ; therefore, the pain received in the spirit, is spiritual ".¹ Moreover, that fire must be distinguished from the *mode* or *way* in which the spirit is tormented by it ; for all agree in admitting that a spirit cannot naturally suffer from a bodily substance ; hence, after seeing in what ways theologians teach that the fire of hell differs from the fire of this world, we are led naturally to reply to the next question : "In what way does this fire torment the soul ?"

¹ Suarez, *De Angel.*, lib. 8, cap. 14.

For the better understanding of the answer which we shall give, let us first see in what ways they grant that it cannot suffer from a material agent. In the fourth book of his treatise *Contra Gentes*,¹ St. Thomas cautions us against thinking that an incorporeal substance, such as the soul is, can suffer from material fire, in such a way as to be altered by it, to be corrupted by it, or to be by it in any way changed as our bodies would be, if exposed to its devouring action. It is impossible for it to suffer torment from the fire in the same way in which the bodies of the reprobate will suffer, when joined to their souls after the general resurrection ; because incorporeal substances neither have the organs of sense, nor do they make use of sensitive powers.

Suarez, in his eighth book, *De Angelis*,² admits that the fire of hell does not torture the devils by inducing corporeal heat, nor by filling them with pain, such as it would cause in our souls when united with our bodies ; nor does he teach that the pain arising from the action of the fire upon a disembodied spirit, is the same as the pain experienced by one imprisoned in the bonds of the flesh. It cannot, however, be inferred, from what these two eminent theologians have said, that because it is impossible for a spirit to suffer from corporeal fire, there is *no mode whatever* in which it is possible for Divine Omnipotence to cause it to feel torment from that element. St. Augustine was so far from deeming it impossible, that he says : "that fire tortures the spirit, in true, though wondrous ways" ; for we must admit that it is in the power of God to do something which it is beyond our power to investigate. Even our reason points out to us the possibility of the soul's being able to suffer from the action of material things. That action, it is true, is brought to bear upon the whole being that is made up of soul and of body ; yet, though that whole being feels the ill caused by material agents, nevertheless it is certain that the soul, which is part of this being, and communicates to the body sensation, itself also in some way suffers.

This fact, of course, does not positively explain the *mode* in

¹ Cap. 90.

² Cap. 14.

which the spirit suffers from the fire, since it is not united to the fire as a form, as the soul is united to the body ; but it shows that it is, at least, not repugnant to the nature of a spirit, that there should be some mode in which it can suffer from the agency of material things. The knowledge of this caused St. Augustine to say : “ Those pains which are called pains of the flesh, are in reality, pains of the soul in the flesh ; for the pain which we feel in the flesh is a hurt received by the soul from the flesh, which hurt causes the spirit to revolt against the suffering, just as that pain of soul called *sadness*, is a revolt of the soul against those things which have happened to it against its will.¹ So that the more closely we examine into the matter, the more clearly do we discover that what we call bodily pain, is really and truly a pain of the soul.”²

Having seen, then, in what ways it is impossible for a material fire to touch and torture an immaterial spirit, you will naturally ask : “ In what way does the fire torture the souls that are condemned to dwell in it ? ” To this question, St. Thomas answers as follows : “ Inasmuch as corporeal fire is the instrument of divine justice, it has superadded to its nature the power of imprisoning the spirit, and in this way, of being painful to it, by withholding it from the execution of its own will, and preventing it from operating wherever it wishes, and according as it wishes ”.³ In order to understand this reply of the angelic doctor, we must bear in mind that pain is in the *appetite*, and arises from the knowledge and clear apprehension of something inconveniencing and hurtful. But since an Angel and a spirit consist in nothing but in intellect and will, that knowledge of what is inconvenient and hurtful, is derived through the intellect, and that pain is a certain discord in the will.

The detention or imprisonment in fire, spoken of by St. Thomas, causes pain, because it is looked upon by the devils and the lost souls, and apprehended as a something hurtful and unbecoming (*inconveniens*). Many reasons conspire to

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, lib. 14, cap. 15.

² *Ibid.*, lib. 29, cap. 3.

³ *In Senten. Distinct.* 44, q. 3.

make these reprobate beings judge of it in this way. For, it puts between them and heaven, that most glorious abode in which they might be dwelling, a vast and impassable chaos ; it chains them down in hell, the lowest and vilest place in God's creation ; it imprisons them there on account of their sin, a reason the most disgraceful of all others that can possibly be alleged ; they feel that they, the noblest of God's creatures, are held in durance by a creature so small, so vile as fire ; and that it holds them, as the minister of God's avenging justice. On account of these various reasons, they fret and chafe under its coercing power, and, therefore, they are tortured in their wills by most grievous pains. But besides this detention or imprisonment in fire, there is in that element, also an active force which causes not merely displeasure, but inflicts actual pain ; for they are imprisoned in the fire, in order to be by it most grievously punished. The fire by its action causes in the spiritual being the same pain that it would inflict if that being had a body. But what that action is, God only knows. Hence, from the testimony of the theologians of the Church we see that the fire of hell is a material fire. From them we have learnt in what way it cannot torment a spiritual being, and in what way it may inflict upon it unutterable pain. May God give us grace to live so purely in this life that the fire of hell may never touch us in the next.

ETERNITY OF THE PUNISHMENTS OF HELL.

THE historical argument and the argument from reason have sufficiently established for us the existence of hell. The testimony of the scriptural argument on this head is so clear, so precise, so unanswerable as to be simply overwhelming. But, since at the same time that it puts beyond the shadow of a doubt the doctrine of the existence of hell it also demonstrates the eternity of its punishments, we will employ it in this present Lecture to make evident to us this the most awe-inspiring side of this terrible dogma. When we say that these pains are eternal, we must not be understood to predicate

eternity of them as we would predicate it of God. Eternity when spoken of with reference to Him, signifies that which never had a beginning and which will never have an end ; but when attributed to creatures or to created things, it simply means duration without end. This is not infinite, but indefinite. Of this nature is the eternity of the pains of hell. They have a beginning ; they will never have an end.

In two ways the Sacred Scriptures prove for us this doctrine of our Catholic faith. They positively assert it, by saying that they are eternal ; and they negatively assert it, by saying that they will never have an end. In the first place, then, let us consider their positive assertion of the dogma. Isaias, speaking to the sinners who had been seized with fear and trembling at the contemplation of the judgments of God, tauntingly asks them : " Which of you shall dwell with *everlasting* burnings ? "¹ When describing the great judgment that is to close this world's history, the Prophet Daniel says : " Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake ; some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it *always* ".² Against these everlasting burnings and this eternal reproach, Our Lord cautioned the men of His time, and through them the men of all time. In the estimation of Him Who is truth itself and Who never exaggerates, it is deemed far better to lose everything that makes life worth living, than to fall at last into that lake of endless suffering : " If thy hand or thy foot scandalise thee, cut it off and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire ".³ Those who think differently, and ignoring God choose for themselves a temporary heaven in this world, shall, according to St. Paul, " suffer eternal punishment in destruction, from the face of the Lord, and the glory of His power ".⁴ In that land of misery, so far removed from the light and the joy of heaven, they are reserved together with the apostate angels " under darkness, in ever-

¹ Isaias xxxiii. 14.

² Chap. xii. 2.

³ St. Matt. xviii. 8.

⁴ 2 Thess. i. 9.

lasting chains".¹ From their prison-house "the smoke of their torments shall ascend for ever and ever"; and with the false prophet who in the latter days is to withstand the will of Christ, they "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever".² Thus do the sacred writers, in these and in a thousand other passages, assert the eternal duration of the punishment of hell.

But even more emphatic and effective still is the language in which they express the eternity of punishment, by denying that it will ever have an end. The Prophet Isaias writing of those who had transgressed against God, and who not repenting of their sins and their rebellion, had been cut off with the guilty stains disfiguring their souls, says: "Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched".³ Of these and of all such as these, the saintly Baptist speaks under the figure of "chaff," which he declares the great Master "will burn with unquenchable fire".⁴ Though tortured by that fire, they shall not by it be consumed, and so at last escape its keen punishment; for Our Lord Himself declares that "they are in a hell of unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not and their fire is not extinguished".⁵

The fact of the never-ending nature of this chastisement is, if possible, brought out with even greater force and clearness by Jesus Christ, when, describing for His Apostles the dread pageantry of the great accounting day, He tells them what shall be the respective sentence of the just and of the reprobate. To the just, who by their charitable deeds gave Him to eat and to drink, clothed Him in the person of the naked, and visited Him in the person of the sick and the imprisoned, the Judge will say: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". To the reprobate who, by their hardness of heart towards the poor, neglected to perform for Him any of these offices, He will say: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire". In pursuance of these widely different sentences,

¹ St. Jude i. 6. ² Apoc. xiv. 11; xx. 10. ³ Isaias lxvi. 24.

⁴ St. Matt. iii. 12. ⁵ St. Mark ix. 43.

"these," concludes Our Lord, "shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just, into life everlasting".¹ Here, in one and the same phrase the duration of the beatitude of the just, is by the mouth of the great Judge pronounced to be equal in duration to the pains of the reprobate. Consequently, if any one maintains that these pains are not to last for ever, he must, if he wishes to be consistent and logical, maintain that the joys of the blessed are not to endure for all eternity. For, to say in one and the same line, eternal punishment shall have an end, but eternal life shall not have an end, is to give utterance to an absurdity.² Therefore, the Holy Scriptures prove conclusively that the pains of hell are eternal.

Need we add anything further to their testimony? Though nothing else is requisite for those who have faith, yet it may be of some assistance both to them and to others, if even human reason points out that the punishment of hell cannot but be eternal. This fact begins to dawn upon us, if we consider the state in which man finds himself after death; and its full truth shines before our minds clear as noonday, when we examine the condition in which that state fixes him. Speaking figuratively of this life and of the next, and urging men by His own blessed example to make the best use of the brief span of time allotted to them, Our Lord says: "I must work the works of Him that sent me, whilst it is day: the night cometh when no man can work".³ That night in which no work profitable unto salvation can be performed, is death. As soon therefore as the breath is out of his body, man finds himself in a state in which all is fixed, is finished. If during the time of his life he neglected the work appointed for him by God, and chose as his occupation a work which gratified his animal instincts, there is no chance of rectifying what has been done amiss, and of repairing the fault committed. Hence, that fault will last for ever. But as long as the fault lasts, the punishment by which it is chastised will last. Therefore, that punishment must be eternal. For, by

¹ St. Matt. xxv. 34, 46. ² St. Aug., *De Civ. Dei*, lib. xxi., c. 23.

³ St. John ix. 4.

dying in a state of impenitence, he has put himself in a state of positive aversion from God, from Whom he turned away during his term of probation, and unlawfully adhered to creatures. Hence, St. Thomas says : " Whatever last end the soul, at death, is found to have chosen for itself, in that state it shall for ever remain, desiring it as its best good, whether it be good or evil".¹

In another place, he even more lucidly explains this when he says : " The sinner's will to adhere eternally unto sin may be perceived not only in death, but in the very act of sinning. For, he who of his own free will falls unto deadly sin, puts himself in a state out of which he cannot be drawn except by the aid of divine grace ; hence, from the very fact of wishing to sin, he wishes to remain for ever in sin."² Therefore, he who dies in sin, dies wishing as his end to be without God, and, consequently, he will remain perpetually without God, that is to say, without the supreme good. Consequently, he will be oppressed with all evils. As long as he lived in this world, he was not altogether without God ; because the good things both of nature and of grace were still within his reach, and he might, if he chose, repent of his withdrawal from God. But in the fixed state of the next life, he will for ever be as he has willed to be. God will for ever depart from him, and man will for ever be deprived of all good, and of even the possibility of repentance.

These last words will doubtless startle some, and will make them exclaim : " Is there, then, no possibility of a return to God ? Will not the soul when it sees the full extent of its folly in abandoning God for so trifling a gain, turn to Him, deplore its blindness, and receive from Him, Who is so merciful and so good, the pardon for which it will crave ? No ; this is utterly impossible. The reprobate in hell may have a *regret* for the folly which has damned them, but they cannot have *repentance*. Self-interest can engender regret, but only love can beget repentance. But what spark of love can be struck out of a soul which has turned away from God, and which is for ever

¹ St. Thomas 1-2, 87, 4.

² *In Supplm. Sum.*, q. 90.

fixed in its aversion? Besides, repentance is a meritorious work, and the time for merit has passed away. It is now the night of eternal darkness for the lost soul, and in that night, as Our Lord has said: "No man can work".

Therefore, our reason gives its assent to the conclusion to which the historical and the scriptural argument have led us. There is a hell built up by the infinite justice of God, for the punishment of the wicked, or, rather, it is the wicked man himself that has built round himself a hell. That hell is eternal. Jesus Christ has taught this terrible doctrine. His Apostles have everywhere repeated the lesson which He impressed upon them. The martyrs have shed their blood rather than deny it, and by denying it, fall into hell. Let us bend our knees in adoring awe before this manifestation of God's vindictive justice, and humbly pray that by a humble service of God, and a faithful observance of His law, we may never experience the severity of its crushing stroke.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE ETERNITY OF HELL.

To form for themselves some faint idea of the endless duration of eternity, holy men have had recourse to various methods which brought within the range of their mental vision some shadowy figure of it. The emaciated solitary, working out his salvation in the depths of the Egyptian deserts, nerved himself to endure the fiery heat, the parching thirst, the absence of every solace, of every convenience, by taking up in his hand some of the fine sand, and endeavouring to count its minute particles. Against each of these, he would set a thousand years, and then reflect that if but one grain were removed at the end of that time, a period would arrive, in the lapse of ages, when all the sands of the deserts and of the vast ocean would be taken away. But eternity would then be but beginning. Others would fancy that a bird was sent at the close of each century, and suffered to touch with its wing the lofty peak of some far-off mountain. Then they would say to themselves: "A time will come when that friction will have worn flat with the earth, the vast bulk of yonder snow-capped range; but eternity

will even then be but beginning!" Those who were conversant with figures, appalled their imagination with the thought of eternity, by fancying the vast space which intervenes between heaven and earth filled up with books, the pages of which were covered with countless numbers. These they then pictured to themselves as stretched out in one vast line. If that line were multiplied by itself, how endless would seem the years which its product would represent! Yet that number would not be eternity. At the end of it you might write: "Here begins eternity". "Just consider," says a holy Jesuit father, "what this means! Two figures indicate the duration of the ordinary life of man. Three give us the days of those Patriarchs whose long lives provoke the incredulity of the sceptic. Six give us the age of the world."¹ Form then for yourself some notion of eternity. The brain reels. We close our eyes, and take refuge in our faith.

No wonder then that men, whose faith is weak, or who have lost it, call in question and strongly object to this doctrine of eternal punishment. As you will, in all probability, be thrown into the company of these men, it is good for you to know what they have to say upon this point, and the reasons with which their objections may be met.

Do not, however, for a moment imagine that these objections are the result of modern thought, as it is called, and that they show the superior enlightenment of the present age. They are all as old as the third century, and they were answered both then, by the Bishops of the day, and afterwards, in the fourth century, by the great St. Augustine. The men both of those times and of our own, in one of these three ways, take exception to this doctrine of eternal punishment. When the clear and precise statement on this subject made by Our Lord is set before them, they say that it is of no authority, or that it is a mere threat, or that it must be interpreted in a sense very different from that in which it has been, and in which it is now understood by the Church of God. With the first, we have nothing whatever to do. They are beyond the reach of

¹ Le Père Judde, *Oeuvres Spirit.*, tom. 1.

argument. To the second, we say : "Search the Scriptures, and you will find that whenever God threatens, He invariably carries His threat into execution, unless repentance intervenes and stays His uplifted hand". To the third, we give our attention, because they pretend to bring us a clear light for the solution of a most difficult question.

Their contention is, that the ordinary interpretation put upon the word which is rendered "*eternal*" is not correct, and that it means only a very long time. They are willing to concede to the duration of hell as extended a period as you please ; but they rise up in revolt against a duration that is never to end. To this objection St. Augustine replies by calling attention to the peculiar phraseology employed by the sacred writer, in stating the doctrine held by the Church. He does not say that hell will last for eternity, but *for ages of ages—in saecula saeculorum*. In the Holy Scriptures, this is an expression which is used of only two things : of the eternity of God, and of the eternal duration of the pains of hell. The Apostle St. John, in the Apocalypse, uses it in the former sense, eleven times, and in the latter, twice. If, then, when spoken of God's existence the phrase means for eternity, it will have the same meaning when describing the duration of the pains of hell. This conclusion is further strengthened by a fact which cannot escape the notice of those who carefully read the New Testament. It is that Our Lord, everywhere throughout its pages, opposes the reward of heaven to the punishment of hell. As an example, take that text of St. Matthew's Gospel : "These shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting".¹ If the reward of the just is to last for ever, then the punishment of the wicked must last for ever. So logical is this conclusion, that Origen is said to have taught that heaven will not endure for eternity, in order that he might be able to say, that hell will last only for a time. Those who have undertaken the defence of this great man maintain either that he put forward this view only in a tentative sort of way, and as an

¹ St. Matt. xxv. 46.

objection, or that some of his followers have inserted it among his writings, in order, under the shadow of a great name, to propagate their own errors. But if he really did teach a doctrine so palpably absurd, what does that signify? After all, he is but one great man against the teaching of Christ and of His Church.

Other objectors to the doctrine of eternal punishment, while admitting that the Scriptures teach the eternity of the fire of hell, deny that the fire will punish eternally. In other words, they think that the fire is eternal, but that its punishment is not eternal. In answer to this, St. Augustine bids us take notice, that Our Lord does not simply say: "They shall go into everlasting *fire*, but, into everlasting punishment —*ibunt in supplicium æternum*". It is quite conceivable that there should be an everlasting fire, but that there should be an everlasting punishment, a *supplicium*, without any object upon which it is exercised, is a contradiction in terms, an absurdity. Moreover, the word used in the version of Scripture current in the time of the great doctor, is much more forcible, and it more clearly puts before us the meaning of the terrible sentence of the Judge, than does the term employed in the Vulgate. In St. Augustine's version, the verse runs thus: "Ibunt in *combustionem æternam*," which words may be faithfully rendered in our language by the phrase, "They shall go to be burnt eternally, to be tortured eternally". Also, we must never lose sight of the fact that Jesus spoke to a mixed multitude, of whom the bulk would be rude, unlettered people, and, consequently, would be addressed by Him in the plainest, the most intelligible language. Therefore, when He talked to them of the punishment inflicted upon the wicked as an eternal torture, an everlasting burning, they would and they did accept His words as meaning precisely what He said.

From these difficulties which deal with words rather than touch the really knotty point of the dogma, let us turn to two others which apparently have greater weight, and which to some minds present an insuperable obstacle to belief in this terrible truth of our holy faith. It is alleged, and alleged with truth,

that between the fault and the chastisement inflicted upon it, there must be a certain equality. The weight of that chastisement must not exceed the gravity of the fault, otherwise it would be unjust. But between a fault which lasts but for a moment, and an eternal chastisement, where is the equality? There is none; consequently, no such punishment is inflicted by a God Who is justice itself. To this, the reply is obvious. The shortness of the time necessary for the commission of a fault, is no reason whatever for the diminution of its guilt. Once that fault is committed, its guilt remains for ever, unless it is remitted by the grace of God and by repentance. Therefore, as long as the fault remains, the punishment due to it must last, and, as we have already seen, in the case of the reprobate, the fault endures for ever, and, consequently, it is for all eternity punished in hell. Explaining this doctrine of the great St. Augustine,¹ St. Thomas says: "In no judgment is it required that punishment should be proportioned to the duration of the fault. For murder, though requiring but a moment for its perpetration, is not, on that account, expiated by a momentary penalty, but by perpetual imprisonment, by perpetual exile, or by death. In the infliction of this penalty, no account whatever is taken of the duration of the act of killing; its aim is for ever to remove the murderer from the society of the living. This, after a fashion, represents to us the eternity of the punishment inflicted by God upon sin".² In a somewhat similar way, Nature avenges the infraction of her laws. If we either eat or drink anything that is hurtful to us, or if we perform an action detrimental to our bodily frame, though each of these acts may require but a moment for its consummation, yet the consequences may be a lifelong malady or even an instantaneous death. Therefore, the punishment of an evil deed must not be measured by the length of time occupied in its execution.

Another apparently insuperable objection to the eternity of punishment, is drawn from the goodness and the mercy of

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, lib. xxi., cap. 11.

² St. Thomas, 1-2, q. 87, art. 3, ad. 1.

God. Both these attributes in Him are infinite, and, therefore, it is argued that it is incompatible with them that He should inflict upon sin a chastisement which is eternal. A little reflection will show us how to refute the fallacy which lies in this apparently powerful objection. The goodness or benignity of God towards His creatures, be it remembered, consists in His sincere will to impart to them happiness, according to their nature and the designs of His wisdom. That same sincere will on the part of God to alleviate and to take away the miseries of His creatures, is called mercy. It is quite true that each of these attributes is in itself infinite; but in the manifestation of itself towards creatures, it cannot but be finite, for these manifestations are but the *effects* of His goodness and mercy, and therefore are finite. Now, as God outwardly freely manifests Himself, so also He freely manifests Himself only in that degree in which it pleases Him to do so. Hence, though He is truly good and merciful, though He wills all to be saved, and gives to all the means necessary for that purpose, yet if any one resists His goodness and mercy, abuses the means of salvation, and puts himself in the state of perdition, the fault cannot be attributed to God, if His creature perseveres for ever in that state, unless, indeed, we regard the divine goodness and mercy as a certain blind, undiscriminating affection, and consider the creature as having the right to prescribe for the Creator, the degree and the manner in which He shall communicate to it, His divine goodness and mercy.

Therefore, from what we have said, it is evident that the interpretations put upon the words which are cited to prove the eternity of punishment, fail utterly to demolish or to shake, upon this point, the teaching which the Church has invariably imparted to her children. Also, it is clear that there is no disparity between deadly sin and the eternal punishment inflicted upon it. Lastly, it is in no way repugnant to the infinite mercy and goodness of God, that He should punish eternally those whose crimes are, by reason of their state of reprobation, eternal.

PURGATORY.

Part I.

ITS EXISTENCE.

THE doctrine of the Church concerning Purgatory, is one of those which the innovators of the sixteenth century wiped out of the belief of the people. From that day forth, there was for them no middle state ; it was for the departing Christians either heaven or hell. The plain common sense of many devout and earnest men has begun, in these latter days, to see the unwisdom of so summary a proceeding on the part of the reformers. They perceive and admit, that but very few men, at the moment of their death, are fit for the converse of Angels and the dazzling glory of the beatific vision. Full of imperfections, and of defects, with habits of acting and ways of thinking sadly at variance with those which are requisite for intercourse with the blessed, they quit this mortal scene. The act of leaving it does not rid them of their unlovely shortcomings, and, therefore, these good men have come to the conclusion, that there must be a place and a time for the purgation of these defects and for the education of the soul, till it is able to stand under the glory of God's presence, and mingle unabashed and without shame among the bright spirits who throng the heavenly courts.

But in their zeal for the diffusion of the new light which has dawned upon them, they have tried to extinguish that other very different and lurid light—the doctrine of eternal punishment—a doctrine to which their fathers so tenaciously clung. They would have it that there is no hell, but a Purgatory, the fires of which will burn off all rust and stain from the souls of men, and fit them to live for ever in the kingdom of God. With their innovations respecting the doctrine of hell, we have already dealt ; of their adhesion to our belief in Purgatory, we are heartily glad ; and, while accepting it, we will endeavour still further to strengthen both their faith and our own, by examining the three passages of Scripture, on the authority of which the dogma of Purgatory mainly rests.

By the word "Purgatory," we mean a state of existence lasting only for a certain time, in which state the souls which have departed this life burdened with the debt of some temporal punishment, or with the weight of some venial sins, are chastised according to the measure of God's justice, until they are altogether freed from their debts, and become worthy to be admitted into eternal happiness. Concerning this dogma, the Church has defined only that Purgatory exists, and that the souls detained there are helped by the suffrages which the faithful offer up for them.

The first passage of Sacred Scripture cited in support of this Catholic doctrine, is that well-known text of the Book of Machabees, in which it is recorded that Judas, having made a collection among the Jews, to the amount of 12,000 drachmas, sent that sum to Jerusalem, that sacrifices might be offered for the sins of the dead : "Thinking," says the writer, "well and religiously concerning the resurrection. For, if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be released from their sins."¹

From this passage, it is quite evident that among the Jews there was the firm belief in a middle state, in which sins might be purged away, and the departed soul prepared for its eternal life. For, it is clear that sin is not taken away either in hell or in heaven. In hell, there can be no forgiveness of sin, because there can be no sorrow, no merit, no repentance. In heaven, there can be no sin to forgive ; for nothing defiled can enter that abode of bliss. Therefore, there must be a middle state, a state of purgation, in which the soul may be rid of these lesser faults, and of that debt of temporal penance which was not paid to God before the soul's departure hence. This conclusion from the words of the Sacred Book is so logical, so hard to meet with anything like a rational argument, that

¹ 2 Mach. xlvi. 43, 46.

the reformers had recourse to their usual summary method of shelving similar difficulties. They denied the canonicity of the Book, and the authenticity of the passage quoted from it. This was a matter easy enough to do ; but it was not so easy to make justifiable by any reasons except by such as would make a Scriptural scholar smile. For, from the earliest times, the Books of Machabees were received in the Church, and counted among the canonical writings ; they were frequently referred to and quoted as such by the Fathers ; they had with them the same authority as the other Sacred Books. As to the authenticity of the text in question, it is so indubitable, that no Biblical scholar can rationally call it in question ; for, not a single copy that has thus far come to light has been discovered to be without it. We are, therefore, quite logical in concluding that it records the belief of the Jews as to that middle state which we call "Purgatory". For, no one will maintain that the belief recorded in that passage was peculiar to Judas. It was the faith of a whole people, among whom there were, at one and the same time, many who were both holy and well instructed in all the tenets of their divinely revealed religion. Hence, we read that, "betaking themselves to prayers, they besought Him (the Lord) that the sin which had been committed might be forgotten". Besides this, we have further evidence that such is the case, from the very way in which the whole transaction is recorded by the sacred writer. It is put before us in such a way as to show that he praises it, and proposes it to us as an act to be imitated.

It is no argument against the doctrine of Purgatory, here so plainly set forth, to say that, since the sin for which these soldiers of Judas's army had died was a grave sin, his prayers for them would be worthless ; and, therefore, his belief and the belief of Catholics are quite at variance with each other, since Catholics believe that only venial sins and the debt of temporal punishment due to sin are remitted in Purgatory, whereas the Jews evidently believed that grave sins also might be purged away. This latter inference is not correct ; for, to Judas and his army, it was a matter of uncertainty whether these men had died in the state of grievous sin. They

may, in dying, have sorrowed for their transgression, and they may have been forgiven, especially since they had fought for their faith, for their religion, and had given up their lives for it. Besides, their sin may have been excused by God, because of ignorance, or of parvity of matter ; hence it is said “that Judas considered that they that had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them ”.

Such is the testimony of the old dispensation to the doctrine of a middle state. Let us now consider what the New Law has to teach us upon that point.

In the twelfth chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel, Our Lord says : “ Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him : but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come ”. In these words Jesus Christ asserts, that there is some sin that shall not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come. Therefore, He implicitly teaches us, that there is some sin from which men may be freed in the world to come. In hell, no one can be freed from sin ; and in heaven, no one needs to be freed from sin ; therefore, it must be in the middle state, or in Purgatory that this liberation from sin takes place. Now, although from the fact that Our Lord says the sin of him who speaks a word against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven him, “neither in this world nor in the world to come,” we infer that there is some sin forgiven in the future life, our conclusion though illogical, is still perfectly true. It is not correct according to the laws of dialectics, in which from two negative propositions an affirmative conclusion cannot be drawn ; but it is correct according to the laws of prudence and of wisdom. For, if it were not, Our Lord would be made to speak foolishly, by asserting that in the future life, in which no sin is pardoned, no sin is pardoned. But Our Lord used the common way of speaking, which though incorrect according to logic, is yet quite true according to the laws of prudence and of wisdom. Hence, when in the Gospel of St. John,¹ He said : “ My kingdom is not of this world,” and Pilate straightway drew the

¹ Chap. xviii. 36.

conclusion : “Art thou a king then?” Jesus did not answer, “From a negative proposition you cannot draw an affirmative conclusion such as you have made,” but He rather approved of his inference, by saying : “Thou hast said it”. Nor does it in any way militate against our conclusion that in the third chapter of St. Mark’s Gospel, the phrase “neither in this world nor in the world to come” is explained as meaning “never”; for the Gospel of St. Matthew must not be explained by that of St. Mark, but this latter must be explained by that of St. Matthew, because St. Mark’s Gospel is only an epitome of St. Matthew’s.

Moreover, we may, for the sake of argument, suppose that Christ spoke this sentence as it is given in St. Matthew’s Gospel, or as it is related in St. Mark’s, or in both ways. If He uttered these words in both ways, as they are reported, we have what He intended, and what we maintain that they mean. If He delivered them as they are written in St. Mark’s Gospel (though this is improbable), then we must suppose that St. Matthew, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, has more fully explained these words of the Divine Master, and, unless he has ineptly explained them, has indicated to us that some sins are forgiven in the life to come. They were understood in this sense by St. Gregory the Great, who interprets them as meaning that some sins are forgiven in this world, and certain others in the world to come.¹ St. Augustine says, that unless this were the case, the sentence would not be true.² St. Bernard is of the same opinion, for he asks : “Why did He say this, if in the future life there is no remission, by means of a purgation from sin?”³

Thus, in the opinion of these three great doctors of the Church, Our Lord, in the words cited from St. Matthew’s Gospel, plainly teaches that in the next life there is a middle state in which souls are cleansed from those lesser stains, from those slight defects, and released from that debt of temporal punishment which they had not paid by means of penitential works, before their departure hence.

¹ *Dial.*, lib. 4, cap. 30.

² *De Civ. Dei*, lib. xxi., cap. 24.

³ *Sermo 66, In Cant.*

PURGATORY.

Part II.

ITS EXISTENCE.

HAVING examined the evidence of the Old Testament, for the doctrine of a middle state, and the remarkable words of Our divine Lord, implicitly teaching its existence, there yet remains for our consideration another famous passage which is usually cited in proof of this dogma. It is taken from St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians,¹ and is as follows : “ According to the grace of God that is given to me, as a wise architect, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid ; which is Christ Jesus. Now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble : every man's work shall be manifest : for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss : but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.” These remarkable words are variously explained by various theologians. By some, the words “ wood, hay, stubble,” are taken to mean all venial sins in general ; by others, the venial sins of preachers who, although they do not teach bad and heretical doctrine, which would damage the foundation, nevertheless either superadd to it vain and useless doctrines, or strive to beautify it with the ornaments of profane eloquence, for the purpose of winning for themselves honour among men. Consequently, we may, by a parity of reasoning, argue that what is said of these particular venial sins, ought to be understood also of all other venial sins.

Others among the Fathers, take the words “ shall suffer loss ; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire,” to signify the trials, the difficulties, and the tribulations of this

¹ Chap. iii. 10.

life. The words will of course easily bear this interpretation ; but they cannot either primarily or exclusively be so taken, for the simple reason that the Apostle's words prevent us from thus narrowly interpreting them. "The day of the Lord," he says, "shall declare it," and "he shall be saved, yet so as by fire." Hence, in these words he absolutely promises salvation to those whom the fire shall try ; whereas we know that not all those who are enveloped in the fire of tribulation, come out of it cleansed and made better ; for many faint under it, rebel against the chastening hand of the Lord, and they are only the more deeply immersed in their sinful habits.

By others, the words, "for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire," are said to mean directly, the general judgment, of which the Church sings : "Christ shall come to judge the world by fire" ; but, indirectly, also the day of death and the particular judgment, for the sentence of both judgments will be the same. Others, again, apply the phrase as signifying "a sharp examination," and therefore, the particular judgment itself, speaking of which the writer of the Book of Proverbs says : "As silver is tried by fire, and gold in the furnace ; so the Lord trieth the hearts".¹

From these various interpretations we see that St. Paul teaches, that he who is guilty of venial sins, and who does not purge them away by sorrow, will suffer loss, and after death he will be tried by the fire, yet in such a way that at last he will be saved. Now this cannot, in any way, apply to the souls of the blessed, who are in the enjoyment of the beatific vision, for in them there is no blemish from which they may be purged. Nor can it have reference to the reprobate, who though tortured by fire, will never be saved by it. Therefore, it must be understood of the just, who in a middle state are purged by the fire, and, when perfectly cleansed from all spot or stain, are admitted into the company of the sons of God.

This was the conclusion at which the great Fathers of the Church arrived, after their careful and prayerful study of this question. St. Ambrose, commenting on Psalm cxviii., writes :

¹ Prov. xvii. 3.

“When St. Paul says, ‘so as by fire,’ he points out to us that the man will be saved, indeed, but that he will suffer, in order that being purged by the fire he may enter heaven, and be not as the reprobate, tortured for ever in the everlasting fire”. St Augustine, explaining David’s prayer, “Rebuke me not in Thy indignation, nor chastise me in Thy wrath,” says: “He beseeches the Lord, that he may not be among those to whom Christ will say, ‘Go ye, accursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels’. When he prays ‘not to be chastised in wrath,’ he asks to be cleansed, during this life, and made so pure that there may be no need of that amending fire, enkindled for those who shall be saved. Why is it added ‘yet so as by fire’? Because during this life they build upon the foundation ‘wood, hay, stubble’. Would to God that they would build upon it, gold, silver, precious stones, and thereby be safe from both fires, not only from that eternal fire which will torture for ever, but from that which will correct those who shall be saved by fire. And because it is said ‘he shall be saved,’ that fire is made of little account. Yet it is more grievous than anything they can suffer in this world.”¹

To the same purpose are the words of St. Jerome, St. Anselm, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, the Latin fathers in the Council of Florence, Estius, Bellarmine, and Suarez; so that the Sacred Scripture, and its authorised interpreters, the Fathers, teach us that there is a middle state, in which souls are purged from their lesser sins and defects, and prepared for heaven. That doctrine the Church proposes to us as a dogma of our Catholic faith.

Having thus established the first part of that dogma, let us now consider the remaining point which she has defined, namely, that those souls which are undergoing this purgation are helped by the suffrages and the sacrifices of the faithful.

This consoling doctrine is taught by the Councils held in the Church from the earliest to the latest times.² Their sentiments and their dogmatic utterances may be summed up in

¹ *Enarr. in Psal. xxxvii.*, n. 3.

² See Mazella, *De Noviss.*, n. 1334.

the words of even the schismatical Synod of Jerusalem (1672): “ We believe that the souls of those who have not been cut off in the state of deadly sin, who before their death repented, but who did not bring forth worthy fruits of penance by afflicting themselves . . . and by showing their love both towards God and towards their neighbour—acts which the Catholic Church from the very beginning rightly has called ‘ satisfaction,’ we believe that the souls of these are led down to the lower world, and there they endure just punishments for their sins ; that they are fully aware of their future deliverance ; and that owing to the infinite goodness of God, they are freed by the prayers of the priests, and by the prayers and the alms of their relatives ”.

St. Augustine, in his book *De Cura Mortuorum*, after proving from Scripture that the souls of the departed are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, goes on to say : “ Although we were never to read a word on this subject in the Old Testament, yet the authority of the universal Church, which is renowned for its practice in this respect, is of no small weight ”. Alluding, in one of his letters, to the force of a universal custom, he says : “ To call in doubt anything that is practised by the Church throughout the world, is the height of insolent folly ”.¹ Even Calvin himself is a witness both to the antiquity and to the universality of this dogma in the Church of God. “ For 1300 years previous to our time, it was customary to pray for the dead. All the ancients were hurried away into this error. In that respect they suffered somewhat from human frailty, and, therefore, they should not by their example draw us to imitate.”²

If we consult the various Liturgies in use in the Church, the proof which they give of this practice is simply overwhelming. It is to be found in the Liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem, attributed to St. James ; in that of the Roman Church, attributed to St. Peter ; in that of Alexandria, of Ethiopia, of Milan, attributed respectively to St. Mark, to St. Matthew, and to St. Barnabas. Though we may question whether these Liturgies are the works of those to whom they are usually ascribed, yet

¹ Epist. 54.

² *Instit.*, lib. 3, cap. 5, 10.

we cannot doubt that they are most ancient ; and we know for a certainty, that the Fathers consider the practice of praying for the dead to have come down from the Apostles themselves. The words of St. Chrysostom will suffice to give us an idea of their belief in this respect. In his ninth Homily on the Epistle to the Philippians, he says: "Not without good reason do we maintain that, by apostolic legislation, it was ordained, that during the venerable and most sacred mysteries a commemoration of the departed should be made. For, our forefathers knew that from this the departed derive great profit. How is it possible that God should not be appeased in their regard, when the whole people and the throng of priests are praying for them?" In addition to the Liturgies above named, we may cite, in proof of prayers for the dead, that they may be released from the cleansing fire, those commonly attributed to St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory, and St. Cyril.

Finally, an excellent proof of the existence of Purgatory, a proof drawn from human reason itself, is given by St. Thomas.¹ "Of wisdom," he writes, "it is said, no defiled thing cometh into her."² Isaias calls it a path, and says: 'The unclean shall not pass over it'. But the soul is made unclean by sin, by inordinately joining itself to inferior things. From this uncleanness it is purified during the present life, by means of Penance and the other Sacraments. When, however, it happens that this purification is not completed during the present life, and a debt of punishment still remains unpaid, either through the debtor's negligence or his sudden death . . . it is but fitting that in the next life the cleansing should be finished. This purgation is effected by the endurance of pain, just as during this life it would have been effected by satisfactory penance. For, if such were not the case, the lot of the negligent would be preferable to that of the diligent, because they would escape in the next life the satisfactory penance which they ought to have accomplished in this. Therefore, the souls of the just, who at their departure hence have still left upon them

¹ *Contra Gentes.*, lib. 4, cap. 91.

² *Wisd.* vii. 25.

some stains which must be purged away, are withheld from the attainment of their reward, until they have undergone those pains which will effect their thorough cleansing. It is for these reasons that we say there is a Purgatory."

Hence, it has been the constant and universal tradition of the Christian people, that after this life there is for those who are not yet fit to enter the abode of bliss a term of purification, during which their defects and shortcomings are blotted out by the fires of Purgatory.

THE PAINS OF PURGATORY.

THE testimony of the Sacred Scripture, the teaching of the Fathers, the voice of a tradition ever living in the Church, and the light of human reason itself, all combine to establish the existence of a middle state, in which souls are prepared for the contemplation of that entrancing vision of God, which constitutes the happiness of heaven. That middle state is one of expiation, of quittance from the debt of temporal punishment due to sin, but not paid during this present life ; of purgation from venial sins ; of riddance from the remnants of evil habits, from unworthy affections, and from those countless other stains which, like a loathsome leprosy, encrust the soul and render it unfit for familiar converse with its Maker. To cast off these unsightly imperfections is, even in this life, a painful operation. How much more so in the life to come, when it is effected by an agency other than our own will ? Consequently, the process of purgation is one of pain. Of what nature that pain is, we are now about to inquire.

In Purgatory, as in hell, the pain is twofold. There is the pain of loss, and there is the pain of sense. The pain of loss consists in the privation of the beatific vision, or rather in the delay of its fruition, for that privation is only temporary. That the souls of the just detained in that prison suffer this torment, is beyond the shadow of a doubt. The very reason of their abiding there is because they are not fit to see God. If they were capable of contemplating Him face to face, it would be impossible for them to suffer any pain, because the vision

of God is essential happiness. When that is enjoyed, God shall have wiped away all tears from their eyes ; death for them shall be no more, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more ; for the former things have passed away.¹

But when, upon presenting themselves before the judgment-seat of God, they feel that they are rejected by Him, expelled from His presence, and deprived of the glory prepared for them, and deprived of it at the very moment when it is about to be enjoyed, debarred from it through their own fault, and thrust out into exile until they have completely satisfied for their past faults, their whole being is made to smart with incredible pain. Seeing all these circumstances in a way in which it is not possible for us to see them, and apprehending the immensity of the loss which they have sustained, with a vividness of which our intelligence is at present incapable, they are wrung with a grief so piercing, that it is second only to that which the reprobate shall for all eternity be compelled to feel.

In addition to this intellectual pain, there is the pain of sense, a pain which consists in the experience of something hurtful. That this chastisement also should be inflicted upon the soul, is only in accordance with that which even our unaided reason can see to be right and just. For, as in every personal sin of whatever nature it may be, whether mortal or venial, there is an inordinate conversion or turning to the creature, so also ought that conversion to be punished, not only by the privation of the Supreme Good, but by pains which are caused by some created object. Chief among created agents for inflicting pain, is fire ; and as man is the highest among rational, sensitive creatures, it is but congruous that the instrument employed for his chastisement and correction should be fire. Of this we can entertain no doubt, if we remember that when speaking of Purgatory, the Apostle says, that those who are condemned to its chastening punishment shall be saved “ yet so as by fire,” and that the constant tradition of the Church, as well as the unanimous teaching of

¹ Apoc. xxi. 4.

the Fathers, points to it as the implement used by the hand of God for exacting from them the debt due to their transgressions, and for purging away the stains contracted by their lesser sins.

As of the fire of hell, so also of the fire of Purgatory a question is asked, whether it is a true, real, material fire, or only a metaphorical one. Concerning this, the Church exacts from us no belief that must be held with the certainty of faith ; for, she has never defined anything concerning this point. She may be said to have even studiously abstained from so doing. For, when in the Council of Florence the Greeks openly professed their disbelief in the existence of a purgatorial fire, the assembled Fathers made no attempt to define it. They did not even notice this profession on the part of the Greeks ; and in the definition made in the last Session, they contented themselves with declaring as an article of faith, the existence of Purgatory, without making any mention whatever of fire. Nevertheless, that there is in Purgatory a real, true, material fire is, according to Suarez,¹ an opinion certain within the latitude of theological opinion. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that, on this point, there is a *consensus* among scholastic theologians. To dispute anything upon which there is among them unanimity, is, to say the least of it, a rash proceeding.

Moreover, among the Latin Fathers, there is also a unanimous agreement as to the existence of a true, real, material, purgatorial fire. Their opinion concerning this matter is quite in conformity with the teaching of Holy Scripture, which, when speaking of fire as the pain of the future state, is accustomed to regard it as a real, material fire. In fact, among the more ancient of the Fathers, there was an opinion that the fire of Purgatory and the fire of hell are identical, and differ only in their effects upon those whom they punish, cleansing the just, and torturing the reprobate.

Having established these two points concerning the pain of loss and the pain of sense, it strikes us that a very reasonable

¹ *De Poenit.*, Disput. 46.

objection may be made against both the one and the other. We must bear in mind that the souls in Purgatory *love* God. If they love Him, as they undoubtedly do, their wills will be in conformity with His will. Consequently, their privation of Him, and their detention in the prison of Purgatory are on their part voluntary ; for, knowing that both these heavy penalties are willed by Him, they at once conform their wills with His. Therefore, they cannot be grieved at that which we term their separation from Him. For, grief is occasioned within us by matters which happen to us against our will. From this argument men would conclude that there is not, and that there cannot be any grief in Purgatory. For the souls detained there suffer nothing but what they voluntarily endure as coming from the hands of divine justice.

Now, though it is quite true that the souls in Purgatory love God, and because they love Him have their wills in complete subjection to Him, and, therefore, voluntarily suffer whatever chastisements are inflicted upon them, yet it does not follow that they will experience no grief. For, that which is voluntary in one way, may be involuntary in another, and in this respect may cause intense grief. Thus, when a merchant threatened with shipwreck permits his bales of silk to be thrown one after another into the boiling sea, his act, though voluntary, is yet the occasion to him of great grief. So is it also with the holy souls in Purgatory. Their privation of God is, on the one hand, voluntary ; for they know that the Divine Master wills it, and that it is necessary for perfectly satisfying for the sins which they have committed. But, on the other hand, it is involuntary. For, it is against the inclination of their vehement love, and their natural desire of beatitude. As such, it cannot but fill their souls with an intensity of grief, of which we can form but a very inadequate idea.

Moreover, it must always be borne in mind, that God, of Himself, and by His antecedent will, does not at all will this temporary privation, on the part of the soul, of His presence. On the contrary, it is His will that the just man should straightway, without any delay, be admitted to the joys of the

beatific vision. But our malice, and our negligent, slipshod service of Him being supposed, He wishes, by His consequent will, the detention of the soul in the prison of Purgatory, until it has paid the last farthing of that debt due to His divine justice. It is by accepting this consequent will of God, that the souls of the just detained in Purgatory, put themselves in conformity with the divine will. But, when they consider the antecedent will of God, they are filled with the most poignant grief that they have not accomplished it. Also, they feel the keenest grief when they reflect that it is owing to their wilfulness and their negligence, that the antecedent will of God did not become also His consequent will. Therefore, they are filled with exceeding great sorrow for the cause which prevented this, a cause which has its origin, not in God but in themselves.

Thus, we see that these holy souls, though completely in conformity with the will of God, are nevertheless filled with an overwhelming grief. That grief arises from two great and grievous punishments: they are, for a time only, deprived of the vision of God, and hence they suffer the pain of loss; and they are tormented by that awful fire which in their regard is only not the fire of hell because, though it inflicts exquisite suffering, it at the same time burns off the rust of the sins which they have committed, and at last enables them to rise from the expiatory flames into the presence of that beatific vision, in the contemplation of which they will forget all pain, for the tears shall be wiped from their eyes, and sorrow and crying and death shall be no more.

GRAVITY OF THE PAINS OF PURGATORY.

THE pains which the spirits of the departed endure in their state of purgation, are, as we have seen, of two kinds. There is the pain of the intelligence, arising from the privation of the beatific vision, and there is the mysterious pain of sense, arising from the contact of the soul with the cleansing fire. Both these pains are exceedingly great, and cause in the soul torments so severe that the Fathers, almost without

an exception, teach that those which are inflicted in this life are not even to be compared with them. Speaking of the pain occasioned by the fire, St. Augustine says : " It is more severe than anything that man can endure in this present life ".¹ On the same subject St. Gregory the Great, writes : " I consider that the transitory fire of Purgatory is more intolerable than any tribulation of this life ". In this opinion these two brilliant lights of the Church were followed by Venerable Bede, St. Anselm, and St. Bernard. Now, though all agree as to the gravity of these pains, a question has been raised among theologians, as to whether the least pain of Purgatory exceeds the greatest pain of this life. As is usual in all inquiries of this kind, some have taken one side, and some the other. We will lay both opinions before you, and you will then see which of the two it is better to adopt, for upon this point there is no dogmatic decision of the Church.

The angelic doctor, St. Thomas, is among the number of those who consider, that the least pain of Purgatory exceeds the greatest pain that can be endured in this life. For, as he argues, the more ardently anything is desired or longed for, the more keenly is the privation of it felt. Consider, then, the soul of man, when loosed from the trammels of his mortal flesh and launched into eternal life. There is now no obstacle to impede its affections from rushing impetuously towards and cleaving to the Supreme Good. Consequently, its love for that Supreme Good is most intense, and in proportion to its intensity, is the pain which it must experience by the forcible delay of that happiness for the enjoyment of which it was created. We may, therefore, with good reason, believe that the anguish which the soul experiences on this account is far greater than anything that men can feel for temporal losses ; for, the good of which it is for a time deprived, is far more excellent, its appreciation of its loss far more keen, and its desire to recover it, far more intense than it is possible for the soul to feel while in this present life. A circumstance which tends immensely to heighten its suffering must not be lost

¹ *In Psal. xxxvii.*

sight of. This is the fact that the sense of its loss, and the desire to repair it, never for a single instant have any abatement, any cessation. By night and by day, moment after moment, during which the process of purification lasts, the pain of that terrible privation is burning, as it were, into the very marrow of the soul. Here below, when pain wrings our mortal frame with anguish, or when sorrow clouds our mind with gloom and despair, there are moments, and sometimes hours and days when the sweet balm of sleep soothes our throbbing nerves, and oblivion wraps our mind in the folds of a forgetfulness which brings with it rest. Loving friends also come to visit their poor stricken brother, and, by their compassion and their cheering converse, steal away his thoughts and his attention from the pain. But it is not so in that abode of penitent sorrow. There is no sleep ; there is no forgetfulness ; there is no rest, no, not even for a single instant, from the steady contemplation of that awful loss, and the burning wish to recover it.

Moreover, it is but rational to believe that divine justice purposely causes them to apprehend that loss with a keenness of perception, of which they themselves are naturally incapable. For, the very purpose for which their happiness is delayed, and their exile prolonged, is that the grief and the pain thereby engendered may purge them of their faults, and help them to pay the penalty or debt of temporal punishment due to their sin. We do not, of course, believe that the Fathers detained in Limbo, before the atonement of Christ released them, underwent a torment of this kind. Their case was far different from that of the souls in this middle state. These latter are punished for their own personal transgressions ; the Fathers were debarred from heaven, simply by the condition of their state, inasmuch as the original stain and the debt contracted by it had not been blotted out, and the ransom paid, conditions necessarily to be fulfilled before they could enter into their rest.

Therefore, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, the pain caused by the privation of God, commonly called the pain of loss, is greater than the greatest pain caused by the losses

incurred here below. His doctrine is the same with regard also to the pain of sense. It is more severe than any torture that man is capable of suffering during the course of his mortal life. The pain of the suffering souls is not the result of a hurt or a wound ; it is the sensation of being hurt, of being wounded. Therefore, their torment from that sensation must be in proportion to their sensitiveness. Experience demonstrates to us the truth of this ; for, a wound, or a blow, inflicted upon the more sensitive parts of our body, causes a keener suffering than one which is inflicted upon a part in which there is comparatively little feeling. But what is that which imparts to the body its capability of feeling, and, consequently, of suffering? It is the soul that animates, fills with life, the otherwise insensible flesh. Therefore, it is the soul that is wounded, through the body, if we may use such an expression ; or to speak more correctly, it is the soul that feels the sensation of being hurt, of being wounded. The body, consequently, acts as a kind of rampart to the soul, a rampart which when struck, conveys the sensation of the blow greatly dulled, modified, lessened, from the fact of falling upon its shield, its defensive covering. But when the blow, the wound, the hurt, is dealt directly upon the soul itself, the sense of suffering must, of necessity, be exceedingly great, and surpass anything of which we have experience in this world.¹

On the other hand, we have St. Bonaventure² maintaining that in Purgatory the pain of loss is not greater than all other pain, an opinion which met with the heartiest approval from Bellarmine, who argues that although the absence of the Supreme Good generates of itself in the mind supreme grief, yet that grief is very much softened, and its burden lightened, on account of the sure hope of at last obtaining possession of that good. For that most sure hope brings with it an incredible flood of joy, and the nearer that hope is to its consummation, the more ecstatic is the joy.³ Only in one sense does St. Bonaventure admit that the pains of Purgatory are greater

¹ St. Thomas, Suppl. q. 100, a. 3.

² 4 Distinct., 20.

³ *De Purg.*, lib. ii., cap. xiv.

than the pains of this life ; and that is, that the greatest pain of Purgatory is greater than the greatest pain of this life, though there is some pain of Purgatory less than some pain of this life. As if to confirm this opinion, there have been from time to time vouchsafed to the Saints of God, certain revelations, from which it is evident that the pain of some souls is so slight that they seem to suffer nothing at all. In these visions, the souls of these favoured few were seen clothed in garments of resplendent whiteness, dwelling in pleasant places, and bathed in a mellow, golden sunlight which circled them as with a halo of glory.¹ Moreover, although there is some doubt whether the pains of Purgatory afflict the souls of the just equally from the beginning till the end of their trial, or whether these torments gradually decrease, as the end of their purification draws nigh, yet the more probable opinion inclines to the belief, that they do diminish in intensity, till at last they cease altogether, and the happy souls wing their flight to the realms of bliss.

From all this, it follows that not each pain of Purgatory is greater than the greatest pain of this life ; for that pain of Purgatory which is drawing to its end ought naturally to be so slight that it cannot be made less without ceasing to be a pain at all. That these pains do decrease in their intensity is furthermore confirmed by a vision which St. Bernard, in his life of St. Malachy, has recorded for our instruction. It seems that the sister of the holy man of whom he writes died, and, on hearing of her decease, St. Malachy poured forth his most earnest prayers to God, that He would vouchsafe speedily to cleanse her soul from all stain, and admit her to the joys of His glorious presence. On three different occasions, he was favoured with a vision of his beloved sister. At first, she appeared to him clad in black garments, and standing outside the church. On the second occasion, he beheld her within the church, just beyond the threshold, and in garments of a lighter hue. On the last occasion, she was seen by him standing close to the altar, clad in radiant vesture and mingling with

¹ Ven. Bede, bk. v., chap. xii.

the Saints of God. From this he understood that her soul had ceased to suffer, and that the suffering had gradually grown less severe, till at last it altogether ceased.

In conclusion, we may observe that of the two opinions concerning the pains of Purgatory, it is safer to adhere to that of the theologians who built their views, not upon visions concerning which men may be deceived, but upon Scripture, the teachings of the Fathers, and reason. These sources of doctrine give us that which is thought to be the ordinary process by which God prepares the souls of His servants for their eternal life with Himself. The revelations of the Saints, though not to be set aside as unworthy of credence, in all probability tell us only of the exceptional way in which Our good Father behaves with a privileged few.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING PURGATORY.

Part I.

IN this Lecture, we purpose to discuss three questions which not unnaturally suggest themselves to those who believe in the existence of Purgatory, and in the pains which there are endured by those who, in this world, have not repented of their venial faults, nor satisfied for the debt of temporal punishment incurred by their sins. The first of these questions regards the locality of that place of expiation ; the second, the duration of its bitter torments ; the third considers whether, during the term of their banishment from the face of God, the holy souls are certain of their ultimate salvation and beatitude.

Among scholastic theologians, there is a unanimous opinion that Purgatory, like hell, is in the centre of the earth. As a matter of fact, as we have already said, many of them consider that the same fire afflicts both the just and the reprobate, purging the one of their stains, and punishing the other for their transgressions. This place many of them conceive to be divided into four parts, one for the reprobate ; another for the souls of the just undergoing their purgation ; a third for

infants who have died without Baptism; and a fourth in which were detained the holy men who died before the coming of Our Lord. Of this last-named place, commonly called in the Holy Scripture by the name "Limbo," there is now no use. In that assigned to the infants who have died unregenerated by the waters of Baptism, they teach that there is an absence of all suffering, and that they enjoy a natural beatitude which is all that their nature is capable of appreciating. A text in the Acts of the Apostles, undoubtedly warrants the view which these learned men have adopted, as to the locality of Purgatory. It is to be found in the twenty-fourth verse of the second chapter, in which St. Peter's sermon is given. Filled with the Holy Ghost, the great Apostle was speaking to the Jews of the crime which they had committed in putting Our Lord to death. He boldly asserted that He Whom they had crucified, had in very deed risen from the dead. "God," he said, "had raised Him up, *having loosed the sorrows of hell*,¹ as it was impossible that He should be holden by it."

These words are taken by St. Augustine² to mean the pains of Purgatory, by which pains it was impossible that Our Lord should be touched, or in any way impeded, or detained. The Church also seems to favour their interpretation, and to adopt their view; for, in the Mass for the departed, addressing Our merciful God, she says: "Deliver the souls of the departed from the pains of the lower world (*inferni*), and from the deep pit". If any weight can be attached to the visions of the Saints, they, too, go to prove that the locality of these cleansing fires is in the centre of the earth. One of these visions, as recorded by Venerable Bede, places it in the vicinity of hell. In fact, among theologians, there seems to be a generally received opinion that both places are in reality one, and that the only distinction between them, is in the different effect produced upon the souls that are cast into that prison; the just are purified by its searching fire,³ the reprobate are punished by it without being in any way benefited.

With regard to the view held by the Schoolmen, St. Thomas

¹ *Solutis doloribus inferni.*

² Epist. 99.

³ *Ignis inquisitor.*

says : “ In all probability, the locality of Purgatory is of two kinds, if we may argue from the words of the Saints, and from the revelations made to them ; first, that which is the general place of purgation, situated in the vicinity of hell ; so that by the same fire the just are purified, and the reprobate are tormented ; . . . secondly, that which is, as it were, an exception to the general law, in which some are punished in divers places, either for the instruction of the living, or for the help of the departed, that their pitiable condition being made known to the living, they may help them by their charitable prayers ”.¹

These suffrages of the faithful, as we are taught, very often either shorten for the departed the term of their imprisonment in the penal fires, or procure their instantaneous release. We are, therefore, led by this consoling doctrine to ask the second question, concerning the duration of their detention in that abode of sorrow.

In reply to this, we must admit, that nothing can with certainty be determined about it. Yet, though all our reasonings can result in nothing but conjecture and surmise, theologians have arrived at two conclusions upon this point. They teach that souls are usually plunged into that sea of suffering for a very considerable time ; and that no one will be there kept in exile beyond the judgment day. For their first conclusion, they appeal to the custom of the Church, which not only allows, but sanctions, the celebration of Masses for the dead on the anniversary of their departure, a custom which she suffers to go on for century after century for the same souls. This custom, according to St. Augustine, is most commendable, and in his opinion, it cannot be sneered at without branding the scoffer with the mark of “ most insolent folly—*insolentissima insania* ”.² It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that when the theologian Dominic Soto thought fit to broach the opinion, that no one is debarred for more than ten years from the beatific vision, by imprisonment in Purgatory, his novel teaching was received with a storm of reprobation which

¹ Suppl. a., 2, *De Purg.*

² Epist. 118, *Ad Januar.*

at once made evident to the minds of men, what the sentiment and the teaching of the Church are upon this matter.

The second conclusion, namely, that after the general judgment, no one will be detained in Purgatory, is put beyond the shadow of a doubt by the words in which Our Lord will pass sentence upon His elect, and upon the reprobate. That sentence portions out the whole human race into only two great divisions. To the first, He will say: "Come ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". To the second, He will say: "Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire". Therefore, there is no possibility of any of the elect being sent back to the penal fires from which they are summoned, to receive the reward of their well-doing. Consequently, after the judgment day, the fires will cease their office of purgation, and all the children of God will be recalled from their exile to dwell for ever in their Father's house.

But before that great day, and while souls are actually undergoing their purgation, have they a certainty of their ultimate release from punishment, of their ultimate salvation? Since the condemnation of Luther, who in his thirty-eighth article writes: "The souls in Purgatory are not sure of their eternal salvation, or at least not all," it has been held as a certainty among theologians that they are sure, that they have the consolation of knowing that a crown of glory awaits them in heaven, and that nothing either can deprive them of it, or prevent their acquisition of it. We cannot for a moment doubt that all these souls know, that as many as are consigned by the just judgment of God to these cleansing fires, are certain of salvation. Also, they cannot fail to be aware of the fact that they are in Purgatory, and not in hell. Therefore, by an evident and certain consequence, they know that they will eventually gain possession of that crown which the just Judge has prepared for them. They know that all who go to Purgatory are saved; for, it is an article of faith, according to that saying of St. Paul: "He shall be saved, yet so as by fire". Now the souls in Purgatory, by the act of separation from their bodies, have not lost the faith which

they held during the course of their mortal lives. Consequently, they must know with the certainty of divine faith, that they are among the number of the elect. Moreover, they know that they are in Purgatory. For, at the moment of their death, they were ushered into the presence of Jesus Christ. By Him they were judged. By Him they were sentenced. Therefore, they must be fully aware of the place to which His justice has consigned them. They themselves have willingly gone, under angelic guidance, to the place which their loving Lord has allotted to them. From that place they are conscious of not having moved. How, then, is it possible for them to be ignorant of the locality in which they are confined? They feel perfectly certain that they are not in heaven; they know that they are not in hell; they perceive that they are not among the souls of the children that have not been baptised; they are aware that the Limbo of the Fathers no longer exists. Where else, then, can they be, but in that penitential prison from which they are certain, with the certainty of faith, that they will one day be released and admitted to the company of the Angels and the Saints, to taste the never-ending joys of the beatific vision.

If every other assurance of their ultimate beatitude were wanting, they would undoubtedly learn the nature of the place to which divine justice has consigned them, from the bright Angels—very probably the Angels who guarded them during life—under whose care they have been conducted to the place of their final probation.

Thus, in reply to the questions which we addressed to ourselves, we have learnt what the opinion of the Church is as to the locality of Purgatory, the duration of its punishments, and the knowledge of those there detained of their ultimate salvation. None of these points is a matter of faith. They are all purely speculative questions, to which theologians have endeavoured to give a rational answer. We are not bound to pin our faith to them, but we ought to treat them with at least that deference and respect which the opinions of devout, learned, and saintly men deserve to receive.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING PURGATORY.

Part II.

As we saw in the preceding Lecture, the holy souls, during the period of their purgation, are certain of their eternal salvation. If they have this certainty, there will follow from that fact, two notable consequences: they know that they are in the state of grace, and that they can never sin again. From this most consoling knowledge, of which they are as much assured as they are of their own existence, we may legitimately draw the very natural conclusion, that they are confirmed in divine grace. Concerning this matter, we will simply ask: "Whence do they receive this confirmation in good?" Then we may venture to inquire: "Whether in that blessed state they are able, though suffering the penalty of their own shortcomings, to pray, and to obtain favours both for themselves and for others?"

As to the source whence these spirits of the just, derive this immutability in the happy state of grace, we see at once that it is not from any inborn force, peculiar to the soul itself; that it does not come from any internal, actual perfection, either habitual or natural. They do not see God. If they did, that entrancing vision would fix them for ever in good. They have, it is true, the good habits contracted during the days of their pilgrimage, and these are not lost at death, but they abide in the soul, just as they did during its sojourn in this world. But these, excellent as they are, are unable to procure so great perseverance and immutability. Perhaps it is owing to the separation of the soul from the burden of the flesh? The mere fact, however, of being rid of the trammelling flesh, is not enough to account for that fixity of will, which is implied in one who is confirmed in grace. For, we see what disasters befell the Angels. They had not the seductive promptings of a fleshly body to entice them away from the path of righteousness. Yet they swerved from the line of rectitude, and they show us, beyond doubt, that a spirit, while in its state of probation, is not, from the mere fact of being a spirit,

proof against sin. We must, therefore, look for some principle to which we may assign that stability in good, with which the holy souls are endowed. This principle is none other than the divine grace and protection which confirm them in good, by reason of their state. For, in that state they know with certainty, that the pains which they endure are only temporary, and that from them they will infallibly pass into the glory of that kingdom which shall never end. Both these assurances call for, require, and presuppose a confirmation in divine grace.

They necessitate, also, the complete absence from the soul, of all sin. If the soul were stained by mortal sin, grace could not abide in it; if it were disfigured by venial sins, the pain inflicted might be more and more prolonged. If we consider their position from God's point of view, we can find in it nothing that would prevent Him from bestowing upon them this inestimable favour of confirmation in grace. According to the teaching of the theological schools, He bestowed it upon the Fathers who, before the coming of Jesus Christ, were debarred from the enjoyment of the beatific vision, and detained in what is called in Scripture "Abraham's bosom," that is to say, in Limbo. Also, we may argue that if, as is perfectly certain, He favoured several of the more distinguished Saints with this confirmation in grace, even while they were still wayfarers upon the earth, with much greater reason may we conclude that He will bestow it upon His children, now that their battle of life is over, and they are standing upon the very threshold of their Father's house, in which the feast is already laid, the robe of honour prepared, and the pledge of God's love in readiness to be given them as a mark that the past is forgotten, and an eternity of glory is dawning upon them.

How congruous with right reason this conclusion is, may be seen if we bear in mind the condition in which the reprobate find themselves, when the shifting scene of this world has vanished from their view; when, in the twinkling of an eye, they have been judged; and the sentence of eternal doom has been passed upon them. They have clasped evil to their

bosom, and it will cling to them for all eternity. God has abandoned them, and in consequence of His withdrawal, they are confirmed in evil. As Our Lord Himself expresses it, in that terrible Parable of the ten virgins, "the door is shut" upon them. They are left out in the dark, that exterior darkness in which there are wailing and gnashing of teeth. They are confirmed in evil. Now, if this happen to the wicked, why should not precisely the opposite happen to the just? That it does happen, is in agreement with the common belief of all theologians who have written upon this subject, and with the unvarying and constant tradition of the Church. Therefore, we conclude that, immediately on their departure hence, the souls of the just are confirmed in grace, either by being immediately received into the beatitude of heaven, or by experiencing the special favour and protection of God.

When in this blessed, though suffering and exiled state, we naturally ask: "Whether these blessed ones can obtain by their prayers any favours and graces either for themselves or for others?" Formerly it was an opinion held by some, that they could do neither the one nor the other. That opinion, however, has met with general reprobation throughout the Christian world. It is now a firm belief held by the vast majority of theologians, that they are able to pray and to obtain both for themselves and for others, innumerable graces and blessings. Where is there anything repugnant to reason in the idea that they are able to pray for and to obtain favours for themselves? If Our Lord represents to us one of the reprobate as being able to pray for a favour both for himself and for his brethren, it cannot, surely, be repugnant to reason that a soul destined to heaven should be able to do the same. The rich glutton prayed, but he did not obtain his request. The souls of the just pray, and they are able to obtain from God a favourable answer to their prayers.

First of all, they can pray to God, Whose children they are, for a speedy deliverance from their exile, subject, as a matter of course, as all petitions made to God must necessarily be, to His divine will, and the order of His

providence. In reply to this humble petition, God may grant their request either by shortening, for the sake of His beloved Son Jesus Christ, the period of their probation, or by exciting the faithful to pray for them, and thus procure their release. As they know for a certainty that eternal glory awaits them, when the term of their expiation is at an end, they do right in eagerly desiring and in wishing for the end of their suffering. If it is a good, as it undoubtedly is, they may not only desire it, but earnestly pray to obtain it, and make known to God that earnest wish, that longing desire. Moreover, if they need some help or some consolation, that they may be able more easily to endure the suffering caused by their absence from God, what reason can be alleged that they should not be able to ask for and to obtain that accidental good? To desire it, is an upright affection of their nature. It manifests a great love of God, for they wish to be able to exercise that love during their exile, in a way more easy and more sweet than is possible for them when enduring the torment occasioned by the temporary loss of the Beloved of their souls.

That they are able, by their prayers, to obtain graces and favours for those who are still engaged in the battle of life and in peril of eternal death, is a belief so widespread, so general, so deeply rooted in the minds and the hearts of the faithful, that a negation of it would be met with an outcry so loud, that it would manifest the sentiment of the Christian world. The people taught by their pastors, and abundantly convinced of this truth by personal experience, argue the matter with great common sense. They say to themselves: "These holy souls are the friends, the children of God. They are most dear to Him. They will soon be clasped to His bosom. He longs to have them home. He knows their virtues and their merits. Therefore, He is ready to listen to them, and to grant their requests. True, they have been rejected by Him; but it is only for a time. True, He afflicts them; but it is only as a loving father who corrects his children." This correction they themselves accept with humble and loving patience. They suffer as children suffer at the hands of their parents, not as servants do at the hands of a master. Consequently, it is not

repugnant to reason that, in their state of suffering, they should be able to obtain some favours for their brethren and their friends. We, though wayfarers in the world, though stained with many faults and imperfections, enjoy this privilege. God hears our poor prayers and carries into effect that which we desire, even though we deserve nothing but punishment at His hands. With how much greater reason may we expect that He will do much more for those whose race is run, and who are certain of their prize. Therefore, we may rightly conclude that the debt of punishment, still to be paid by these blessed souls, does not hinder them from praying for us, or from obtaining from Our merciful Father those graces which He is only too ready and too willing to bestow.

CONFESSiON.

ITS DIVINE INSTITUTION.

ONE of the religious duties which you are very frequently called upon to perform, is the confession of your sins. This act of humility, when made to an approved priest, is a Sacrament, inasmuch as the acknowledgment of your sins is an outward sign, their forgiveness is the result of inward grace consequent upon the absolution of the sacred minister, and that priceless gift of grace argues the institution of Christ, Who alone is able to annex to any material act a power so astounding as the cleansing of a sinner. When man has made shipwreck of his innocence by the commission of grievous sin after Baptism, Penance is the only plank by which he can save himself from the angry waves threatening to engulf him. To seize upon that means of salvation and to use it, in order to escape the destroying waters, is an act most humiliating to the pride of our fallen nature. Hence it is, that the dogma of confession has been most fiercely and most persistently attacked by those who have fallen away from the Church. The pretext which they urge as a defence of their hostility, is that confession is a merely human institution, introduced by crafty priests, for the purpose of enslaving in a degrading servitude the consciences of men.

In opposition to this gratuitous assertion, it shall be our duty to prove that confession owes its origin to Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

On one occasion about a year before His death, and when "in the quarters of Cæsarea Philippi," He asked His Apostles : "Whom do men say that the Son of man is?" They answered and gave Him the various opinions current concerning Him, among those with whom they had conversed. He then pointedly asked them, what they themselves thought of Him. Peter, replying for all, made that glorious confession in which he declared that they believed Him to be the Son of God. Our Lord thereupon changed His name from Simon to Peter, constituted Him the foundation-stone of the Church which He was about to establish, and said : "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."¹ Later on, when in Galilee, He addressed to all the Apostles the very same words that He had addressed to St. Peter. This promise He fulfilled after His resurrection, when breathing upon His Apostles, He said to them : "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them ; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

It is evident from these words, that the Apostles received from Our Lord the power to forgive or not to forgive sins, according as, in their judgment, those who presented themselves to them, should seem to be either rightly disposed or not sufficiently disposed to receive so great a favour. The power thus received directly from Christ, they in their turn would transmit to their successors, for there will be sinners in the Church of God till the end of time. The use of this power both by them and by their successors, would also have to be exercised in a rational, and not in a general, hap-hazard sort of way. Consequently, they would be obliged first to know that which they were going to bind or to loose, to

¹ St. Matt. xvi. 19.

forgive or to retain. Hence, the necessity for confession on the part of those who come to ask for forgiveness of sin. The words of Christ made both the Apostles, and their successors to the end of time, judges of the sins of men; and as no judgment can be rational unless founded upon a competent knowledge of the cause submitted for decision, the necessity for confession is manifest. Therefore, by giving the Apostles and their successors power to forgive sins, Our Lord at the same time implicitly imposed upon those who should seek for that remission, the obligation of making known their delinquencies, to the judges established by Him. Confession of sins is, therefore, not a human, but a divine institution.

Throughout all the centuries from the days of Our Lord unto our own times, the belief and the teaching of the great writers and Fathers have, on this point, been unwavering and unanimous. To cite in detail their testimony to this dogma of the Church, would swell this short Lecture into a volume of no mean dimensions. For this we have neither the time nor the space. We must therefore be content to put it in a summary way before your minds. We claim as witnesses in its favour all those who, in the days when Montanus and Novatianus taught that there were certain sins which could not be pardoned, maintained the unbounded power given to the Church's ministers by Christ, to forgive each and every sin committed after Baptism. In the next place, we claim as champions in its defence all those Fathers who, in consequence of this unlimited power conceded to the ministers of this Sacrament, are loud in their praise of the dignity of the priesthood. We cite as unquestionable evidence in its favour, the ritual books both of the Eastern and of the Western Church, in which books the order for the due administration of this Sacrament, is given with scrupulous accuracy. Lastly, we may appeal to the universal, unvarying teaching of the Church throughout all ages, concerning the seven Sacraments, among which ever and always is numbered the Sacrament of Penance.

Thus, we have the never-dying voice of the Church speaking from age to age, and transmitting the doctrine delivered by Christ

concerning the forgiveness of sins, so that we are able to trace back, with unerring certainty, to the source whence it sprang, the dogma of the confession of sins, and its necessity for obtaining forgiveness, when confession is possible.

Besides Scripture and tradition, we have human reason to appeal to as a witness of the divine origin of this Sacrament. We know, and all the world knows, that the practice of confession is a fact in the Catholic Church. For the existence of that fact, only one of two causes can be assigned. Either Jesus Christ is its author, and it is consequently of divine institution, or it has had its origin in man, and, therefore, it is a merely human creation. If it comes from the legislation of men, the author of it can easily be found, and the precise date at which its binding force came into existence, may be accurately determined. But who can point out to us either the one or the other? If confession were introduced by some Pope, or by some Bishop, or by some Monarch, there will be evidence of that fact in the history of the time. So odious an institution, so repulsive to proud human nature, so hard upon the darling vices of the heart, could not have crept in unobserved. Let us suppose, for a moment, that confession had never been heard of, had never been practised up to this present year. If a mandate were suddenly issued by Pope, by King, by Emperor, or by Parliament, what an outcry there would be! What indignation would be expressed on public platforms, what protests would be formulated by cities and by assemblies of wrathful men! The noise of their outcry against so unwarrantable an infringement of their liberty, would be heard through many centuries, and their vigorous rebellion against the unjustifiable attempt to impose the fetters of confession upon them, would find expression in some monument conveying to the latest posterity a memorial of their detestation of so hateful and tyrannical an imposition.

Human nature is the same in every age. What men would do now, they would have done at any other time. Had confession been instituted by man, they would have resented its introduction. But nowhere do we find any such uprising, on account of the introduction of confession. Therefore, it had

its origin in Christ, and it was imposed on His followers by the great Master Himself.

In the fifteenth century there was made, in several parts of Europe, a most vigorous protest against confession. But this was directed against the practice of it, not against its introduction. Some of the more uneducated controversialists, who are set up to attack the Church and her doctrine, confidently assert, that in the thirteenth century, confession was first introduced by the Council of Lateran. This assertion causes the learned to smile, and they easily perceive how an ignorant, or a half-educated man, reading the enactment of the Council, would fall into this error. Seeing that the Fathers decreed that the faithful should confess once a year, he would be led to suppose that he had, for a certainty, discovered the origin of confession in the Catholic Church. The Council did not introduce confession ; it merely fixed the date when the people are bound, at least once in each year, to approach that holy Sacrament.

Do what they will, the enemies of the Church can find no other source whence the practice of confession has flowed, than Jesus Christ. By giving to His Apostles, and to their successors, the power to forgive sins, He constituted them the judges of consciences. That office necessitates a knowledge of those consciences, a knowledge which cannot be obtained except by the humble avowal of the person who comes to these judges, to crave pardon for those acts of which his conscience is cognisant. Hence, the necessity for confession. Therefore, Jesus Christ Who instituted the office of pardoning sins, instituted also the necessity, the obligation, of manifesting these sins, that the office of pardoning might be exercised in a rational manner. Therefore, the institution of confession is of divine origin.

QUALITIES OF CONFESSION.

WHEN you have carefully prepared yourself for the Sacrament of Penance, by a thorough examination of your conscience, by exciting within yourself a heartfelt sorrow for your sins,

and a firm purpose never again to be guilty of them, your next step is to present yourself at the sacred tribunal and confess them to the duly appointed minister. This act must be endowed with certain qualities which we will now explain to you.

The most important of these, is that your confession should be *entire*. It must be an avowal of all the mortal sins of which you have been guilty since your last confession, or if this is your first one, an avowal of all the grievous sins which you can call to mind since you have been able to discriminate between good and evil. This *entire* confession of sins is necessary, both as to the number of times each sin has been committed, and as to the kind of sin of which you have made yourself guilty. It would not, for instance, be sufficient to say : "I have stolen, I have calumniated my neighbour, I have sworn, I have given way to evil thoughts, and consented to evil desires". In addition to this, you must state the number of times that each sin has been committed, and in the case of evil desires and acts, the objects of them.

We take it for granted that you will understand that you are not obliged to be mathematically correct as to the number, but only so far as your memory, after a diligent examination, is able to recall the number of times.

The reason why this integrity is requisite is very easy to understand. When Our Lord said to His Apostles : "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven ; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained," He conferred upon them and upon their successors, power over all sins that should be brought before them for remission. Their power to forgive sins would, however, be useless, unless all the sins of which each penitent had been guilty were made manifest to them. For their power is a judicial one, a power consequently which cannot be rightly exercised, unless the case presented before them is made known to them. If they were to pronounce sentence upon the simple, general admission of guilt, without knowing precisely the nature of it, they would be acting imprudently, irrationally ; they would be abusing the power entrusted to them by God ; they would very likely pronounce a sentence of remission in

a case in which, if all the details were known, they would be obliged to give a sentence of condemnation. Therefore, because Our Lord has thought fit to institute confession in the form of a judgment, there is a rigorous obligation of making a clear, entire statement of the case to His ministers, that is to say, of confessing all the mortal sins of which you are conscious, both as to their number and their species.

Having secured this most important quality, there are certain others which, though not so necessary, are yet requisite to ensure to you all the benefits that flow from this Sacrament of divine compassion and mercy. In stating the case against yourself, you must study the utmost *simplicity* of language. A plain, straightforward, unvarnished tale, from which all unnecessary words are excluded, is best for giving the judge a right idea of your guilt.

In recounting that history of yourself, your manner must be *humble*. It will not fail to have this quality, if your heart be truly touched with the enormity of your transgressions. You will kneel, as that posture is the best for a culprit. Your tone of voice will express your humility. It will not be loud, nor indicate indifference about the matter brought before the notice of the confessor; but shame at the disgraceful nature of the sins, will strip it of that flippant tone which sometimes makes proud men recount their offences against God, as if they were narrating a history of some other person in whom they had no interest whatever.

Besides being humble in your manner of confessing your sins, you must take care to confine all your remarks strictly to yourself. It is your own misdeeds that you are confessing. Hence, you must not introduce the evil actions of others to the knowledge of the sacred minister. Above all things you must never mention their names. Their wickedness is no affair of yours, nor are their names matter for confession. To mention them is to be uncharitable towards others, to defame their character. Therefore, be *discreet*, for by avoiding these faults your confession will have this quality also.

It is hardly necessary to remind you, that your confession should be, and that it must be a *sorrowful* one. All that

we shall say about contrition, will make this abundantly manifest to you. Therefore, let sorrow show itself in your demeanour during your reception of this Sacrament.

Moreover, your intention in frequenting it must be a *pure* one. On this, also, it is scarcely necessary to insist. For, it is manifest that the chief end for which Our merciful Redeemer instituted it, is to free us from the guilt of sin. That it should strengthen us, console us, and be the means of guiding us aright amid the allurements of sin, are other ends which are gained by it, and in seeking these as well as in gaining forgiveness of sin, we are fulfilling the will of Christ, and are pure in our intention. All that we mean to say, then, is that we should never make use of this Sacrament in order, by our pitiful tale, to move the compassion of the confessor, to win his good-will, to inspire him with a high esteem of our sanctity, or for any other similar unworthy purpose. What a perversion would this be of one of God's most merciful dispensations ! Without any effort to win them, we may be perfectly sure of the confessor's good-will and compassion ; but to aim at winning his esteem, is a pitiful vanity. What we go to him for, is not to recount our virtues, but to expose to him our miseries and our sins. Beware, then, lest by seeking to exalt yourself in his esteem, you should lower yourself in the esteem of God. You know the fate of him who went up to the Temple, ostensibly, indeed, to pray, but in reality to glorify himself. He went forth a greater sinner than he entered. So, also, will it be with you, unless you go to confession with a pure intention.

If you be careful to have, in your confession, these various qualities which we have brought before your notice, you cannot fail to have one other with which we will close the list ; you will have a readiness to obey your confessor, and to carry out all that he enjoins you. In all probability he will point out to you the root or cause of all your sins. Sometimes a boy becomes vicious and depraved, simply because he will not occupy his mind with the work which he has to do. He will sit listless, aimlessly staring into vacancy, instead of vigorously working at his appointed task. Being idle, he has the

disadvantage of having seven devils pitted against him, instead of having to fight only one. Consequently, it is not to be wondered at, that they find abundant work to occupy his thoughts, to fill his imagination, and to engage the other senses and faculties of his body and his soul. The confessor will tell him to work, and if the boy be in earnest, he will do so.

Another will be told that the cause of all his misfortunes is a prurient curiosity for reading prohibited books. He wishes to taste of the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil. He does so, and with disastrous results. He will be told to give up his taste for dubious, or for decidedly immoral literature. He must be willing to do so, and to carry his will into effect.

To another the confessor will say: "I perceive that your sins are occasioned by the company which you frequent. You are critical and censorious, because you go with boys who are always decrying their masters; you are disobedient, because they contemn authority, and you have not strength of will to contemn their opinions; you give way to evil thoughts, because you keep not a guard over your love for your friends; you are, perhaps, living in habitual sin, because in the company of certain persons you hear, and see, and do that from which you ought to flee as you would flee from the jaws of death. You must avoid *evil* company; you must avoid *dangerous* company."

Now if you be in earnest about your soul's salvation, you will do as he tells you. For, remember, he is not only your judge to pass upon you the sentence of forgiveness, but your counsellor to advise, and your physician to prescribe. If in a difficult case, a man consults a lawyer, he is careful to follow his advice. If you are sick, you go to a physician. He tells you, to take such and such medicines; carefully to abstain from such and such meats; to avoid this and that. With what scrupulous exactitude do you carry into effect each particular injunction! You must treat your confessor in the same way, and you will experience from your obedience results as beneficial to your soul as are those which accrue to your body from a faithful compliance with the prescriptions of your physician.

Therefore, that your confessions may do you all the good that God wishes them to do, strive to make them faultless. Confess each and every sin of which your conscience accuses you. Be simple and straightforward in your statement of your sins ; humble in your manner ; discreet in your language and in your concealment of every one but yourself ; sorrowful in your accusation. In every confession let your intention be pure,—simply to obtain pardon of your sins and the graces of the Sacrament. Above all things, never forget to carry into effect the good advice of your confessor. With qualities such as these, you need never fear that you will make a bad confession.

BENEFITS OF CONFESSION.

WHENEVER we are afflicted with bodily pain, with sickness, or with disease, we lose no time in going to those who are skilled in the art of discovering the cause of our maladies, and of applying the remedy which will remove them from our system, and ease us of the unrest which their presence fails not to generate. No matter what may be the confusion which the revelation of these maladies may cause, or the agony which their healing may inflict, we gladly endure both the one and the other, in order to secure the benefit of which we stand in need. Now the soul, as well as the body, has its pains, its maladies, its diseases which call for alleviation and for removal, as loudly as do those of the body. But to come within reach of the healing art, these ills of the soul must be made known to its physician, just as the ills of the body are revealed to the physician whose science deals with our material being. If, then, in the disclosure of our spiritual diseases, we suffer confusion and mental agony, we must bravely endure them, in view of the benefits which such a manifestation will not fail to procure.

First among these benefits is the relief of that need which the soul feels for sympathy and direction. In its joys and in its sorrows, it looks for some other soul to which it can confide the various emotions stirring within itself ;

from which it can seek and obtain that counsel which will bring it peace. God Who created the heart of man, and Who knows so well all its necessities, has furnished a means which will supply this need felt by every one of us. He instituted the Sacrament of Penance. How admirably is that sacred institution adapted to meet the need which it was ordained to satisfy! In it we find just what we want, one into whose patient ear we may pour the burden of our sorrows, our pains, our difficulties, our falls, our most humiliating moral diseases. He who sits there ready to attend to us, is a man like ourselves, for God did not confide this ministry to any of His Angels. Those bright Spirits are too high above us, too far removed from the frailties of our weak nature, to feel sympathy with its miserable failures, too lofty in celestial virtue not to contemn our weakness—so at least we feel inclined to believe. Therefore, He has ordained for its exercise men like ourselves, with hearts like our own, with feelings akin to ours, men liable to the same weaknesses, the same faults and the same sins; who are tempted as we are; who have to struggle as we do; and who may by sad experience have known the very pains and sorrows which we desire to confide to them.

Yes, they are men like ourselves; but they are men whom God Himself has selected. In their early boyhood He called them apart from the world, and set them like precious gems in the very sanctuary, to be polished and prepared to shine with a lustre more glorious than by nature was theirs. There under the watchful guardianship of His own eye, they grew up like Samuel to man's estate, daily advancing as their great prototype did, in wisdom and in grace, while they advanced in stature and in age. In the quiet of their collegiate homes, they year by year acquired that fund of knowledge, that grasp of theological and of ascetical principles, which was to fit them for the office which they were destined to fill. At the appointed time, after a long and severe training in all the virtues of their state, they were advanced step by step through the various grades of the levitical hierarchy, till they stood before the altar for that mysterious imposition of hands, by which the spirit and the power breathed into the Apostles by

Jesus Christ, were imparted to them. Thus constituted in the priestly office, they took their seat upon the tribunal of Penance, as the judges, the counsellors, the physicians of the human conscience.

They are, as it were, a race apart ; they have no worldly business to occupy their thoughts, no temporal possessions to engross their attention, no family ties to entangle the affections of their hearts. They are there to receive your confidence. They are all for you. Their time, their experience, their learning, their patience, their charity, are at your disposal. If you be unable to go to them, they will come to you. It matters not whether you are rich or poor, whether you are learned or unlearned, in them you will find all that you require. Even if you be stricken with some deadly disease from which your most intimate friends flee away in terror, they will come at your call, and aid you at the peril of their lives. Where else in the world can you find men who are more worthy of your confidence? Thus, in the person of His priests, God has provided a human heart into which you can pour all your woes—a kindly heart to compassionate, an intelligent mind to direct, an experienced head to guide, and a resolute will to support you in your weakness and to compel you to walk in the straight and rugged way of virtue.

Moreover, as if to invite your unbounded confidence, and to secure you against any misgivings lest it should ever be abused, the man into whose ear you pour the sorrows, the failings, the secret and shameful sins of your life, is bound under the most awful penalties never to divulge anything that, under the seal of confession, you impart to him. To him, it is a knowledge that is dead. No power on earth can compel him to disclose it. He may, with an oath, and when interrogated by an earthly judge, declare that he knows nothing whatever about the matter which you have imparted to him. For he sits in that tribunal, not as a man, but as God's representative, and over him, in that capacity, no earthly power has any authority. God Himself seems to have guarded His ministers from ever betraying the trust that is reposed in them. Confession has now been practised for well-nigh 2000 years,

and never, in all that lapse of time, has any priest of God, even though fallen, degraded, and at enmity with the Church, directly broken the seal which confession sets upon his lips.

Now, with all this to invite your confidence, consider the pressing need which you yourself feel, to take advantage of that which God has provided for you. When sorrow like a dark cloud settles down upon your heart, when guilt oppresses it, and remorse will let you have no peace, nature itself urges you to get rid of the evil that is torturing you. You feel impelled to make it known to some one else, and when at last you summon up courage to lay open before him the cause of your unrest, you find instantaneous relief. Your burden is at least divided ; you have only half of it to bear. But who will dare to do this, when there is question of those evils which are buried in the depths of the heart? It is easy enough to manifest sorrows, misfortunes, errors, mistakes and troubles. The ills of the soul, however, are of quite another character. They are humiliating, they fill us with confusion, we hardly dare speak them to ourselves. Yet they are as cutting as the sharpest steel, and cruelly stab us as with a weapon, the point of which has been anointed with corrosive acid that burns, and eats its way into the very marrow of the soul. We cannot keep them to ourselves ; we dare not reveal them even to the mother who so tenderly loves us. God knows this ; therefore, He has provided you with a friend, a confidant into whose heart He has poured some of that love with which He Himself loves you. You go to him. You call him father. He treats you as a son. He is kind, sympathetic, loving. He knows your ills. A word suffices for him to divine all. He lays his finger ever so gently on your wounds. The virus of sin leaps out under his touch. You rise a new man. It is as if a great load had been lifted from your shoulders. You have cast it down at his feet. Your ills are all gone. You are at peace. You are at rest. Thus, the great need of sympathy and of confidence is satisfied by the divine institution of confession.

Another benefit which flows from this first one, is that of guidance or direction in the path of virtue. At an early age

every one feels within himself the existence of those two men of whom St. Paul speaks,—the one seeing what is good and approving of it, the other following that which is bad, though at the same time condemning it. A thousand objects turn him aside from the path of righteousness; a thousand others urge him into that of iniquity. That which is needed, in these circumstances, is the counsel of a virtuous man. He throws the powerful weight of his influence into the right scale, and turns the balance. Now, in confession, the young man at the outset of his career, or the middle-aged man in the prime of his life, or the old man when life's storms are nearly spent, finds that of which each of them stands in need,—a patient listener, a kindly heart, a sympathetic friend, who after hearing the tale of weaknesses, of errors, of temptations, and of miserable falls, is able to point out the cause of the weakness, to show how errors may be rectified, temptations overcome, and even falls turned to good account. He is one who speaks with authority, and with certainty, in consequence of his wide experience and his thorough knowledge of the human heart, a knowledge acquired not from books only, but from actual contact with it in that tribunal in which men are not afraid to manifest its most secret depths to his kindly eye. He is one, moreover, who speaks with that persuasive force which is possessed only by those who can say to those who consult them: "What you see me do, do ye also". For the life which the vast majority of priests lead, is as like as they can make it to that of their great model,—they practise what they teach.

What an advantage, then, for the acquisition of virtue, does that man hold in his hands who frequently goes to this tribunal, in which his heart finds that sympathy and that counsel of which it stands in so much need? The priest has sympathy for his weaknesses, his troubles, his sins, and counsel to enable him to rise from them, to grow strong in virtue, and to be valiant in the service of God. Why, then, will you be wretched and miserable, while you have within reach so excellent a remedy for all the ills that oppress your poor, sensitive heart? You are attacked by the devil; he harasses you; he worries you;

he frights you with the phantoms of sins ; he lures you into his snares ; he entangles you daily more and more ; you need somebody to whom you may with safety impart a knowledge of your woes, and from whom you may obtain counsel which will enable you to rid yourself of them.

Go, then, to the tribunal which Christ has established in the world. There you will find a consoler, and a counsellor. Go often, and for all your difficulties. If you be in sin, you will extricate yourself from its meshes, and learn how to avoid the wiles of the devil. If you be just, you will obtain grace to be still more just, to advance daily in God's favour, till at last you will be fit to enter into the joy of your Lord.

BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF CONFESSION.

CONFESSION does not merely supply the need felt by the human heart and the human intelligence for sympathy and direction. It reaches much farther than that. It lays its finger upon the very cause of the soul's unrest ; it ministers to the mind diseased by sin, plucks from the heart a rooted sorrow, and by the power of the keys, purges clean of all the filth of sin that bosom which sin filled with the tempest of remorse. By going thus to the very centre of the evil, it is productive of the most beneficial results upon man, whether looked at as an individual unit, or as united with other units and constituting what is termed human society. The consideration of these results will materially aid us to keep ever fresh in our minds, a high idea of this divinely established ordinance of the Catholic Church.

Confession beneficially affects the individual man, first in his soul. For when burdened with guilt, and oppressed with the ills which guilt engenders, he presents himself before a rightly ordained minister, commissioned by competent authority to receive him, and, after sorrowfully confessing his sins and promising amendment and due satisfaction, he is by him absolved in the form prescribed by the Church, all the guilt with which his soul was defiled is utterly blotted out, and he rises from his knees the friend and child of God : " Whose sins you shall

forgive, they are forgiven" ; "Whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven". He is rid of those poisonous elements which wrecked his moral being, and numbered him among those for whom there can be no peace : "There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord". Their presence in his soul made it as impossible for him to have repose, as it is for a man to rest who has a broken limb, or a neuralgic pain, or some internal disease which is eating away his life. The memory of his transgressions is always present to his mind. In the midst of his pleasures, amid the preoccupation of his business, in the solitude of his chamber, and in the noisy publicity of the crowded streets, it stands by him like a menacing spectre. To him it is what the avenging Furies were to the ancients, what the insatiable vulture was to Prometheus—the destroyer of rest, of calm, of happiness.

But now behold the marvellous transformation which is worked in him by confession. To his trouble, there succeeds rest ; to the tempest in his soul, a profound calm ; to his sadness, an exulting joy. The poison of sin weakened the whole moral fibre of his being ; the grace of the Sacrament braces it up, and gives to it toughness and elasticity to resist the assaults of his spiritual enemies. The devil after instilling the poison of sin into his soul, fastens upon him the chains of servitude ; the absolution of the priest, pronounced upon earth and ratified in heaven, strikes them off and sets him free. Sin defaces the image of God impressed upon the soul in Baptism ; thus deformed, the soul becomes an object of loathing to God, of horror to itself ; the grace of the Sacrament plunges it, as it were into the furnace of God's love, softens it, and makes it capable of once again being stamped with the sign and the superscription of the great King. Thus restored to favour and to honour, and rehabilitated in his own eyes, man rises from the feet of his confessor a new being, bright, glorious, and free "with that freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free".

Such are the happy results, upon the soul, of the divinely ordained Sacrament of Penance. Now the soul and the body are so closely, so intimately united with each other, that the

well-being of the one contributes very much to the well-being of the other. Hence, by directly benefiting the soul, confession indirectly benefits the body also. For the body being the tenement which the soul inhabits and informs, is shaken to its very foundations by the storms of passion which sweep through it; it is set on fire by the anger and the desire for revenge which burn within it; it is made to crumble by the envy and the jealousy which smoulder there; it is brought crashing to the ground, by the passion of lust which undermines and consumes the basis on which it rests. Hence, the first care of the physician, when called in to check the progress of decay and ruin, is to discover whether these are caused by the wear of nerve-tissue, consequent upon great labour and owing to natural causes, or are not rather the result of the unrestrained passions of the soul within. Many of them find, upon close examination, that their patients stand in need of the priest more than of the physician. They then wait till the moral physician has done his work, ministered to the mind diseased, and purged the soul of its destructive passions, before they attempt to deal with the material maladies engendered by the violent storms which these passions have caused to beat against the frail structure of his bodily frame. Their penetration has often had its reward, in many well-nigh miraculous cures. Even men who have no faith whatever in the spiritual power of the Church, have yet been struck with wonder at the marvellous change wrought in their patients, by the soothing power of the Sacrament. Those who before were troubled and anxious, became suddenly calm and peaceful; those who were gloomy and fearful, became radiant and courageous; those who frantically clung to life, became resigned and anxious to do the holy will of God. Under these favourable conditions these physicians applied the remedies which their science taught them to be best adapted for meeting each particular case, and as the soul had ceased to fret, and chafe, and agitate the vessel of clay in which it was a prisoner, their efforts were not unfrequently crowned with unexpected success. In this indirect way, confession is beneficial to the bodily health of man.

Let us now turn our attention from man as an individual, and consider him uniting with other men, coalescing with them into vast peoples and nations, and forming what we call human society. In this capacity, as well as when standing singly and apart from his fellows, confession is unto him the cause of incalculable benefits. For these gatherings together of men into vast masses, may be regarded as so many human personalities having a soul as well as a body. They are man himself on a grand scale, joined with his fellow-men for mutual aid, for mutual protection, for mutual profit. There is in them, as in man, a governing principle, which causes the various parts to cohere and stand together as one body. To that principle, all the separate elements or units must yield obedience, by a due subordination of part to part. Like the soul in the individual man, its duty is to maintain this subordination, to uphold particular rights, to preserve order. Any attempt to invade those rights, or to destroy this order must be met by it, and if possible frustrated. The means at its disposal for this purpose, is a code of wisely drawn-up laws, impartially and firmly applied. But there are offences which militate against the well-being of human society, offences which it is impossible to reach by any code no matter how skilfully devised or how prudently administered. Against these, therefore, there must be some power which will oppose a barrier to check their deleterious influence upon the interests of the great body at large. This power is seated in the tribunal of Penance. It puts a check not upon the hand only, but upon the will. It prohibits not merely the unjust seizure of another's property, but even the coveting of it, which lurks unseen in the folds of a man's secret heart. It forbids not only all unjust uprising against authority, but even disobedience to the lawful commands of a Superior. It sets its face not only against deceitful practices with one another, but even against the most insignificant untruth. It sternly condemns and punishes not only murder, but the harbouring within the bosom of jealousy, anger, and the desire of revenge. It throws its protecting shield before the very heart of all human society, not only by strictly enforcing the spotless purity of family

life, but by prohibiting the harbouring of unclean thoughts, the fostering of unchaste desires, the uttering of unseemly words. Thus, the power of the confessional makes itself felt in that inner sanctuary of man's heart, whence proceed all those ills which wreck human society. These beneficial results are noticed with admiration, and acknowledged by those who do not believe in the Catholic Church, and even by that Church's most inveterate foes. The great philosopher Leibnitz speaks with unbounded praise of confession, as a check upon the secret crimes which eat away the heart of nations and of peoples. "Confession," said Voltaire, "is the strongest bridle against crime." "How many acts of restitution and of reparation," exclaims Rousseau, "has not confession caused to be made among Catholics!"

Therefore, recall frequently to your mind these beneficial effects of the Sacrament of Penance. They will make you see how God designed it to benefit, not only the body and the soul of man, but all societies of men, no matter for what purpose assembled together. Do not rest content with simple admiration of it as an implement useful for the government and the well-being of man. Make frequent use of it. Go to it as to a bath, in which you may cleanse yourself from the filth of sin ; as to a remedy, which will heal all your maladies ; as to a fountain of strength, whence you may gather force to withstand and defeat your enemies ; as to an oracle, which will with divine wisdom guide your feet along the steep and slippery path of life. The frequent use of it will make you first of all a good Christian, and by being a good Christian, you will be a good citizen, contributing by your exemplary conduct to the progress of that human society of which you are a member.

CONTRITION.

THE lonely prisoner seated in his darksome dungeon, chained to the wall like a wild animal, and pining for the bright sunshine of the outer world, hails as an Angel of light the faithful friend who comes to him, and tells him how to rid himself of his shackles and regain his liberty. With no less delight and

eagerness ought you to receive the instructions which we are now about to give you ; for they will point out to you, or rather they will put into your hands an implement with which you will be able to strike off the chains of sin, to burst open the doors which bar you from your freedom, and shut you in from the sunshine of God's gracious favour. This implement is contrition, the first and most necessary element in the Sacrament of Penance, a Sacrament devised by God for the purpose of ridding men of their sins, and of reinstating them in all the rights and privileges of which those acts of treason against His Divine Majesty had deprived them.

We will therefore speak to you of its necessity, and of the qualities which must enter into it, in order to give to it that force which will burst asunder the bonds and the prison-house of sin, and effect for you all that it was intended by God to accomplish.

The word "contrition" means a breaking, a bruising, a reducing of anything to powder, and, therefore, admirably expresses the sorrow which the Council of Trent says is necessary for the remission of sin. That Council defines contrition to be : "A sorrow of the soul, and a detestation of the sin that has been committed, together with a resolution not to sin again". In these words we must notice, that contrition is not a merely *sensitive* sorrow, but a sorrow of the intelligence which sees the enormity of sin, and of the will which turns away from it with horror, detests it, and resolves never again to give its assent to the solicitings of the devil, or the world, or the flesh. If you bear in mind the purpose of the Sacrament of Penance, the necessity for contrition will be luminously evident. It is to blot out sin. Now, the mere confession of sin, cannot obliterate it from the soul ; nor can the severest acts of mortification atone for its guilt ; for pardon is given only to sorrow for the offence, of which sorrow, when it is present in the soul, the admission of the transgression, and the chastisement inflicted for it, are only outward manifestations.

Contrition, therefore, or sorrow, is to confession and satisfaction that which the soul is to the body. It imparts to them their life, their movement, and their power. Hence it is, and it

always has been, necessary for the remission of sin. To those who desire it and make efforts to have it, God promises pardon; those who neither wish for it, nor strive to excite it in their souls, He threatens with eternal punishment. In old time, He sent His Prophet Jonas to the Ninivites, with a threat of speedy vengeance unless they repented of their iniquities. They turned away from the wickedness of their sins, and in sackcloth and ashes gave a proof of the sincerity of their repentance. God spared them, and changed the purpose of His mind in their regard. He acted in a similar way with David, who, when his sin was brought home to him, fell upon his knees and expressed the sorrow of his soul. But when men were deaf to His exhortations and His threatenings, He failed not to bring upon them the evils with which He menaced them. The men who laughed at the simplicity and the justice of Noah, and turned a deaf ear to his call to repentance, were swallowed in the waters of the great deluge; the accursed inhabitants of the wicked Cities of the Plain were consumed by the devouring fire of heaven; Tyre and Sidon were swept away because of the impenitence of their people; and Jerusalem crumbled away under a storm of fire and blood, because it would not recognise the day of God's most merciful visitation.

Do not for a moment suppose that God acted thus with the sinners of old time, because they were living under a dispensation in which justice held a more prominent place than mercy. Even when Christ Our Lord came and walked about among sinners, sorrow for sin was as essential a condition for pardon, as in the days while yet the world was young. The Baptist preached its necessity as a preparation for the reception of the Saviour's favour. The loving Saviour Himself threatened with eternal damnation all who should not have it in their souls. His Apostles proclaimed its necessity as a condition for salvation. The Apostle of the Gentiles, when preaching before the members of the Areopagus, told them that God looks for all men everywhere to stir up within their hearts this sorrow for sin. If they do, He will pardon them as He pardoned Magdalene, when she fell weeping at His feet; as

He pardoned Peter, when he rushed from the wicked company of the High Priest's house, and shed bitter tears in the darkness of the night ; as He pardoned the dying robber, who while hanging by His side upon the cross, sorrowfully petitioned Him for His gracious mercy.

It is evident, therefore, that without this sorrow for sin, there can be no pardon. Hence, it is very important that you should know with what qualities that sorrow should be endowed, in order to make it efficacious in blotting out sin. As it is the soul that has been the culprit, so it is the soul that must grieve. It is not the hand that has stolen, nor the eye that has coveted, nor the feet that have gone to evil. It is the soul that, using these irrational, irresponsible agents, has gratified itself with those things which they have procured for it. Hence, though the eyes may weep, and the knees may bend, and the hand may strike the breast in token of sorrow, these outward acts are profitless unless the sorrow is from within. Therefore, the first quality of contrition is that it should be *internal*.

In the next place, it must be of such a nature as to be what is called a *sovereign* sorrow, that is to say, a sorrow deeper, more poignant than any other sorrow that merely temporal, material evil can engender in the soul. For, it is but rational that our grief should be proportioned to the good that we have lost. What do we lose by sin ? We lose not that which is lost but for a while, not that which the hands can touch, the eyes behold, the senses enjoy ; but God the sovereign good ; and, therefore, our grief for offending Him by sin must surpass the grief that we feel for any other evil that can befall us. When sorrow is of this nature, it is called *sovereign*.

In addition to this, it must extend to all the mortal sins of which we have been guilty. There must be no exception. We cannot cherish in our hearts a love for one and a detestation for all the rest. By so doing, we render our repentance of no avail. We are trying to serve God and Mammon ; to be with Him, and at the same time against Him ; to gather with Him, and to scatter. Such a repentance, is no repentance at all.

Moreover, our sorrow must spring from a supernatural

source. It must come from God. For that sorrow, being the effect of the operation of grace in our souls, must be sought for from the Holy Spirit of God. We ourselves are unable of ourselves to do any salutary work. That power comes from God, in Whom, and by Whom, we are able to do all things. Furthermore, the motives by which we endeavour with God's grace to excite it, must themselves also be supernatural, that is to say, they must come from God. To be sorry because sin has covered you with shame, because it has caused you to lose a good position, or to be stricken with disease, would be merely natural motives. These would not suffice to make your sorrow contrition. They fill us with sorrow because of evil which touches self. But supernatural motives are those which fill the soul with grief chiefly for God's sake—because sin is an injury done to Him ; a shameful revolt against His authority ; a black ingratitude to the most generous of benefactors ; a reopening of the wounds of Christ ; the death of the soul ; the loss of heaven ; the meriting of hell fire. When stirred up by motives such as these, our sorrow is not selfish, is not merely a natural sorrow, but it is generous, looking to the injury done to God and not to self. It is therefore supernatural, and this quality, joined with the others already mentioned, makes it perfect, and so potent that the tears of the soul, not seen by mortal eye, falling upon the chains of sin, snap them asunder and set us free.

Therefore, when preparing to receive the Sacrament of Penance, your chief care must be to stir up in your heart true sorrow for the sins of which you have been guilty. More time and greater effort must be bestowed upon it than upon the examination of the sinful acts themselves, and of the circumstances which have either altogether changed their nature, or added to them a greater degree of guilt.

Seek it in humble prayer to God ; with the aid thus obtained, strive to excite it in your mind, and if possible even in your sensitive nature, by a deep meditation on the abominable nature of sin. Be not deceived by mere external signs. Let your sorrow be internal ; let it be greater than for any temporal ill whatsoever ; let it include all mortal sins, without

excepting even one. Let no selfish motive enter into it. Having sought it from God, let the motives upon which it rests be such as He would approve. Strive to be sorry for, and to have for it a holy hatred, because it is injurious to God ; because it is a revolt against Him ; a vile act of ingratitude for His innumerable benefits ; a renewal of Christ's passion ; the death of the soul, and a short, smooth, precipitous road to hell. A sorrow built upon these motives will free you from the fetters and the manacles of sin. It will restore you to the favour of God, and reinstate you in all the favours and the privileges of His children.

IMPERFECT CONTRITION OR ATTRITION.

IN order more thoroughly to understand this all-important part of the Sacrament of Penance, it is necessary that you should make a still more searching inquiry into its nature, so that your notion of it may not be hazy, but clear, sharp-cut and well-defined. In the first place, then, you must know that theologians distinguish two kinds of contrition, the one perfect, the other imperfect ; and in order to discriminate between the two, they call this latter *attrition*, or imperfect sorrow for sin. Perhaps you will be better able to seize the difference between the two, if we first set before you a story with which many of you will probably be familiar, and which admirably illustrates a distinction which some may not be able to see.

In a certain School there were three boys who, on being severely punished for some misdemeanour, resolved to be revenged upon the master who had detected them and caused the correcting rod to fall upon their shoulders. For this purpose they broke open his desk, destroyed his implement of torture, scattered his books about the room, and finding a large manuscript which they deemed of no value, flung it into the fire. On the following day, they were filled with consternation when they learnt, that the seemingly valueless sheets of old paper were a work of great research, on which their master had spent many years of his life. They were

discovered. They were full of shame and of sorrow, but the motives of their grief were very different. The first was full of sorrow because of the impending punishment ; the second, because of the punishment and of the pain and injury which he had caused his master ; the third, because of the pain and injury done to one whom at the bottom of his heart he really loved.

Now, if in the place of the master you put God, and for the boys' foolish and malicious act you substitute a deadly sin, you will have before you three kinds of sorrow which men feel for sin. To be sorry because of impending punishment, is not contrition at all ; to be sorry because of the punishment and of the injury done to God, is that imperfect sorrow which we call attrition ; to be sorry simply and solely for the offence and injury done to God, is perfect sorrow or contrition.

We say that sorrow because of punishment that is to ensue, is not contrition at all. It is the dread of a slave that fears and hates his master. There is no sorrow for the fault ; only a sorrow for the consequences. Even with the absolution of the priest, this would be of no avail to blot out sin. For, sin which is not hated, cannot be effaced from the soul. Now, in sorrow such as this, it is the punishment that is hated and not the sin. The sinner does not care one iota for the grievous offence of which he has been guilty against God ; that which makes him pause in his career of guilt, is the abyss from which the glare of the everlasting fire has cast its lurid light upon his soul. He fears that prison of fire, but not God. But for that fire, he would go on gaily in his wickedness. Therefore, when moved by motives such as these he confesses his sins, that confession is to him of no avail. It does not reconcile him to God, for he cannot become God's friend without loving Him, and of love there is not a particle in his heart.

The next kind of sorrow which men feel for their sins, is one which is made up partly of fear and partly of love. Though imperfect, it is immeasurably superior to the slavish fear of which we have just spoken. Its source is that fear which is the beginning of wisdom, a fear which is inspired by

the aid of divine grace, and is, from a supernatural motive, conceived in the soul. Our Lord Himself bids us cultivate in our hearts a fear of this nature, when He tells us not to fear those who can kill the body, but to fear Him Who can destroy both soul and body in hell. It is with good reason that He counsels us to fill our hearts with this salutary dread ; for it most effectually banishes from the soul all affection to sin. It inspires into it some beginning of the love of God, inasmuch as He is the source of justice. What a thrilling picture does it paint before the imagination, when it exhibits to it the terrors of the death-bed, the awe-inspiring severity of the judgment, and the despair of that dread prison-house whence there is no hope of release ! The effect of this upon the intelligence and the will, is very great. Both are deeply impressed. The intelligence sees all the vileness, the ingratitude, and the abominable nature of sin ; the will turns away from it with infinite loathing. In these dispositions the soul is ripe for complete reconciliation with God. It is fit for the reception of the absolution of the priest. But this absolution is necessary in order to blot out sin. Without it, the sins which have been committed would not be pardoned, and any one dying unabsolved, with only this imperfect sorrow, would not be saved.

Hence the necessity for striving with all the powers of our soul to have that perfect contrition which grieves simply and solely for the offence committed against God, and grieves for it, not because sin is so disgraceful and fills us with shame ; not because it has ruined our health or our worldly prospects ; not because it has merited hell fire ; but because God is infinitely good and hates sin which is offensive to His ineffable sanctity, and is an audacious rebellion against His divine authority. When sorrow such as this takes possession of the soul, its effect is marvellous. It has upon the soul the same power that the word of Christ had upon the dead body of the widow's son. It restores it to the life of grace, even before the form of priestly absolution is pronounced over it. For there is in that grief the force of perfect charity which instantaneously unites the soul with God. Now union

with God, necessarily implies separation from sin, inasmuch as no one can embrace in his love God Who is so hostile to sin, and at the same time be intimately united with that which is so diametrically opposed to His divine nature. Hence we have Our Lord declaring in the Sacred Scripture, that He loves those who love Him ; that those who love Him will be loved by His Father also ; and that He will manifest Himself to them.¹ No matter how heinous or how numerous may be the crimes of which we have been guilty, that charity will cover them all, as St. Peter most emphatically declares.²

But although a sorrow such as that of which we are speaking is able to justify, to restore to the life of grace a soul which but a moment before was the child of hell, and God's most bitter enemy, yet there must be joined with it at least an implicit wish to confess its sins to God's minister. The reason of this is not far to seek. It is because sins can be blotted out only by the means instituted by Christ for that purpose. Our common sense at once sees and admits the justice of this. But the means appointed, as we all know, is recourse to the properly constituted ministers who are established as judges by Christ, and who, on hearing from our lips the sorrowful tale of our offences, pronounce with the authority of Christ the absolution which frees us from their guilt. Only when this is impossible are we dispensed from the humble confession of our sins.

From what has been said, it will be evident that the slavish fear which deters from sin only because of the dreadful punishment which awaits the sinner in the next life, will never be able to strike from his limbs the shackles of sin, and to efface from the soul the stain which will debar it from entering the kingdom of God, a kingdom from which everything defiled is most rigorously excluded. Fear, as we have said, is not in itself bad ; but only that fear which has in it no admixture of love, no regret for the past. When this is joined with it, it becomes a rock to which the sinner may anchor himself, and so prevent himself from being swept into the abyss by the

¹ St. John xiv. 21.

² 1 Pet. iv. 8.

storm of God's wrath. For, when conjoined with this initial love of God, it is able with the aid of the Sacrament to blot out sin. That after which we must all strive is the contrition which, beginning in the fear of God's judgments, passes thence to a love of Him, which love, daily and hourly increasing, purges away in its pure fire all the dross of lower motives, till at last the soul comes to weep over its offences simply because they have offended the Lord of Majesty, Who is so holy, so good, so merciful, so loving. If we aim at this, though it is so high above our sordid, selfish nature, we may at least reach that degree of imperfect sorrow which, with the aid of the Sacrament, will blot out our sins.

Strive, therefore, with all the earnestness of which you are capable, to weep over the past. You are not expected, nor is it necessary that you should weep material tears. These are not always at our command, and, if they were, they would not be an infallible sign of our repentance. That which God looks for are the tears of the mind and the will, tears which consist in a complete turning away from evil, a detestation of it, a clinging to God, and a firm will never again to have anything to do with that which offends Him. Any one who has these dispositions, need not fear that his sorrow is imperfect, especially if these sentiments are engendered in his heart by the consideration of God's infinite goodness, and the knowledge of the infinite claims which He has to our love. May Our merciful Lord inspire us all with sentiments such as these. They will raise us from the death of sin, restore us to the life of grace, and give us a title to the beatitude of God's heavenly kingdom.

PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT.

YOU may be quite certain, that the boy who was sorry for having destroyed his professor's manuscript, partly because of the punishment and partly because of his love for him, as well as the boy who was sorry for his wicked act solely because of his master's goodness, would both resolve never again to be guilty of a similar act. This determination, on their part,

would be called their purpose of amendment. In the Sacrament of Penance, the sinner's resolve never again to fall into sin, bears the same name. It is so necessary a part of his contrition, that if it were wanting, his sorrow would not be contrition at all; for this purpose is its very soul, its essence. It is, therefore, very important that you should have clear ideas about this also, and, that you may have them, we will tell you what are the qualities requisite to make it that which it ought to be.

If you were asked to define what you mean by "a purpose of amendment," you would answer without hesitation: "It is a true will, on the part of the penitent, not to sin any more". If, when looking forward to the future he makes that good resolve, it is called an *explicit* purpose; if he makes it without advertence to the years that are yet in store for him, it is called an *implicit* one. At least this latter is necessary for the Sacrament of Penance. It would be superfluous, on our part, to attempt to prove this, for it is a part of contrition, and without contrition, as you know so well, there is no remission of sin. Now, to be worth anything at all, this purpose must, in the first place, be a *firm* one. There must be no wavering, no hesitation in it. You must not either think or say: "I should very much like to sin no more; but I am so weak, my companions are so wicked, human respect has so strong a hold upon me, and evil so great an attraction, that I cannot promise". You must will to give up sin, and your will must have in it a tenacity, a fixedness of purpose admitting no after-thought of again indulging in that of which you have made a humble confession.

It is quite possible that, with this fixedness of purpose, there may be a fear of again falling into sin. But that fear in no way destroys the firmness of will to adhere to God, if together with it, there is a humble reliance upon the power of grace to keep it unmoved amid the storm of temptation. A fear such as this, instead of detracting from the firmness of the purpose of never sinning again, is rather a guarantee of its security; for, it excludes that presumptuous self-reliance which ever goes before a fall.

But among boys, that which is greatly to be feared in this respect, is self-deceit. They sometimes imagine that their will is fixed, firm, and stable as are the everlasting hills. The stirring truths brought home to them during the days of a Retreat, have awakened their conscience, and shown to them the hideous nature of sin, the terrible severity with which God punishes it, and their own perilous position on the brink of the pit of hell. They examine themselves, they make acts of sorrow, they confess, and then think that all will be right. So it would be, if their purpose to avoid sin were a firm one. Examine and see whether it is.

Is there not, sometimes, half hidden as it were in the folds of their will, and only partially concealed from themselves, a wish, an intent to indulge once more in the pleasures of sin, when a sufficiently lengthy period of time has elapsed to satisfy the requirements of human respect? If so, there is no real purpose of amendment. It is only a counterfeit purpose, which will crumble away under the first breath of temptation. Therefore, be most careful when preparing to confess your sins, to purpose never again in any circumstance, nor for any advantage, whether real or imaginary, to give your consent to sin.

Besides being *firm*, your purpose must be *efficacious*, that is to say, you must take the means to carry it into effect, otherwise it will profit you nothing. Look around you in the School, and you will see several examples of the utter inutility of the strongest resolve when not vivified by this energising quality. One boy determines to be the head of his division; but he never studies, or, if he does, it is only in a desultory sort of way. Does he reach the head place in his school? Look at the class lists, and you will find his name at the opposite extreme. Another resolves to be proficient in music; but he does not, except on rare occasions, practise. As a natural consequence, he is unable either to read or to execute any piece, unless perchance it is one which even a beginner is competent to perform. Another declares that he will be an artist. From the specimens of his skill occasionally exhibited, there are evident signs of great talent, and, therefore,

there is a reasonable hope that he will become an eminent painter. But he does not exercise his skill. He does not study, nor sketch, nor go through the various stages by which excellence is at last attained. Consequently, he never reaches the eminence to which he aspires.

So is it also with those who form magnanimous resolutions to lead a holy life, but who do not care to make their fixed resolve efficacious. They determine to be as pure as the saintly youths who are held up for their imitation. But they are idle. They will not work ; and, in consequence of not working, of not occupying their minds, they leave them open to the incursions of the devil. They do not guard their thoughts ; their imagination is consequently filled with unclean images which flit before it as thick as swallows before a downpour of rain. They know, by past experience, that certain company is dangerous to them. Yet they will frequent it, in spite of many a sad disaster which has been the consequence of their folly. What pains do they take to keep a guard over their eyes ? Do they stop their ears against the entrance of dangerous converse ? Do they bridle their own tongues from evil discourse ? If not, how can they expect anything but utter failure ? They would sow the fruitful seed, but they will not prepare the soil. They would eat the luscious grape, but they will not tend the vine. They would be wealthy, but they will not go through the labour, the drudgery, the painful years of waiting, by which the coveted treasures are gathered together. They wish for the impossible. They would have the end, but they will not employ the means. Therefore, to be of any worth, your purpose of amendment must be efficacious. You must employ those means which will make it so, and your resolve not to sin, will be crowned with success.

It will wear this diadem of victory, if it have one other quality. What is that ? It must, in addition to being firm and efficacious, be *universal*, that is to say, it must extend to all grievous sins. If then you have, let us say, fallen into the sin of detraction, and have grievously wronged your neighbour, or if you have stolen from him a sum large enough to constitute a mortal sin, or have uttered against him a calumny which

has blackened his character, your purpose of amendment must extend to each and to all these sins. Now, these may be the only grave sins of which you have been guilty during the course of your life. Are you then, in your resolution to avoid sin, to include even those which you have never committed? Yes; your determination not to sin must include all sin, whether you have committed it or you have not. Because a true conversion to God cannot take place, unless there is, on the part of the soul, a complete and total turning away from every deadly sin of whatever kind it may be. For, it would be absurd to suppose that any one could adhere with his will to some certain deadly sins, and detest all the rest. To assert any such proposition would be to maintain, that the same man is, on the one hand, justified by the infusion of sanctifying grace, and, that on the other, he remains an enemy of God. It is to say that he is, at one and the same time, a child of God and a slave of the devil. Hence the necessity for the firm and efficacious purpose, to be at the same time universal, extending to each and every mortal offence against God.

How then are you to make it what God requires it to be? Does it depend upon the native strength of your will? No; it does not, as we know from painful experience. Men of iron will, in matters that concern this world, are weak as children when exposed to temptation. The strength, the efficacy, and the universality of our purpose depend upon divine grace which must be sought in humble prayer. God is never deaf to such prayer. Let it, therefore, rise from your heart, and you will find that He will make your purpose firm as a rock. He will enable you to carry it into effect, He will give you a horror of all sin. Should cruel doubts come into your mind about your past purposes of amendment, you will always be able to make sure that they were what they ought to have been by applying to them this simple test: "Did I, after confession, keep out of sin; or if I fell into it, did I rise immediately, humbly determined not to fall again?" If you did this, and if you made, and if you still continue to make these efforts, your purpose was what it ought to have been, your contrition was true, your sins have been forgiven. These

dispositions show that you had the *will* to be healed of your infirmities, and that will, as you know, causes Jesus to exert His healing power on the soul. “Willest thou to be made whole? I will. Then be thou made whole.”

SATISFACTION.

THAT boy who, after maliciously burning his master’s manuscript, was heartily sorry for the grave injury done to him, would be ready by every means in his power to repair the wrong inflicted, and to accept whatever punishment his Superior might think proper to impose upon him. This willingness to accept punishment, and to do whatever is necessary to repair your evil deeds, is called “satisfaction”. It is the third part of the Sacrament of Penance, as far at least as the penitent is concerned; for he has first to know and to be sorry for his sins; then to confess them; and after having confessed them, to satisfy for them. We will, therefore, in this Lecture explain to you the nature and the necessity for this important part of the Sacrament.

To satisfy, then, is to repair the damage done. If you break a window, you repair the wrong done to the College by having the glass replaced. If you seriously injure a companion’s book, you make good the loss which he has sustained, by procuring him another copy. If you insult your master, you satisfy for your fault by humbly asking his pardon, and by accomplishing the penance which he imposes upon you. So is it also with respect both to God and to your neighbour. It is your unhappy lot very frequently to sin against God, and sometimes to do very serious wrong to your neighbour. You are bound, therefore, if you wish for pardon, to be willing to make satisfaction to both, and to do whatever lies in your power to make your will efficacious in act. God is satisfied by the performance of good works voluntarily undertaken by you, or accepted from the hands of His minister in the tribunal of Penance, or by the patient endurance of ills sent from God, or by His permission inflicted by your fellow-men. When you injure your neighbour, it is by doing him bodily harm, or by

depriving him of his worldly possessions, or by taking away his good name. You make reparation to him by compensating him for his bodily injuries, by restoring to him his property, and by making good the damage done to his reputation. Thus, for example, if you had caused one of the servants of the College to break his arm, you would make satisfaction to him by paying all the expenses of his illness, and by supporting him while he was unable to work. If you had stolen from one of your companions, you would restore to him the equivalent of the amount taken. If you had wronged him by spreading abroad reports detrimental to his character, you would make good the injury done, by contradicting them, and striving to counteract the evil consequences which might follow from the utterances of your unguarded tongue.

Thus, you see that the nature of satisfaction consists in wiping out the wrong done, in repairing it, in making compensation to the injured party for what he has suffered.

Now, you may be inclined to ask : "What is the necessity for these acts of satisfaction ? Does not God tell us that, on our repenting of our sins, He will no longer remember them ? Has not Our Lord more than sufficiently satisfied for all our iniquities ? Is it not evident from the New Testament history, that He never imposed a penance upon the repentant sinner ?" Yes, it is quite true that God, after our repentance, no longer remembers our sins, nor threatens us with the eternal punishment due to them. Also, that He has abundantly satisfied for them, but without freeing us from the labour of applying His merits to ourselves. Moreover, it cannot be denied that He never imposed penances for sins forgiven ; but then it must be remembered, that being Supreme Lord, He could dispense with these, and no doubt He did so, because of the perfect contrition with which these favoured servants bewailed their offences.¹ The necessity for these penitential, satisfactory works will, nevertheless, be apparent, if you bear in mind that God does not always remit the whole debt of punishment due

¹ Ezech. xxxviii. 12.

to sin at the same time that He pardons its guilt. Any one who would maintain this, would thereby fall under the anathema of the Council of Trent, which teaches a directly opposite doctrine. He would contradict the Sacred Scripture which, in passages without number, gives us instances in which God exacted punishment even after the remission of the fault committed. Thus, Adam was forgiven, but as a penalty due to his sin, he had to labour and to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. Moses was forgiven, but the penalty exacted from him was that he should never set foot on the Promised Land. David was forgiven, but throughout his long life the scourge of God ceased not to afflict him, and wring from him that tribute of temporal suffering due to sin.

He would, moreover, be in flat contradiction to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, whose unanimity on this point is so manifest, that Calvin¹ was forced to say of them, "that almost all had, in this respect, fallen away from the truth and spoken with too great harshness and bitterness". Therefore, because the inspired writings unmistakably proclaim this doctrine, the Fathers teach it, and the Church by her infallible voice confirms it, you must accept it with your whole heart. You are obliged to perform penitential works, in expiation of your sins. For, by those sins you contracted towards divine justice a debt which, by reason of the infinite majesty of God, is in a sense infinite. To pay that debt, you have nothing. You are in the position of the unjust steward, who owed his master 10,000 talents, and who, when called upon to restore what he had unjustly taken, had not wherewith to pay. Your fate would, consequently, be similar to his, had not God Himself become man, and by suffering the death of the Cross for you, provided you with that which would satisfy for the debts of a million worlds.

Yet, though God is so generous in providing you with the means to liquidate your debt, He will not go so far as to count out the money for you, and hand it over to Him Who claims this satisfaction from you. He created you without any

¹ Institut., Lib. 13, cap. 4.

co-operation on your part ; but He will not save you without the consent and the co-operation of your own will. He will do for you that which you cannot do for yourself ; but He will not do for you that which you can do. The merits, acquired for you by Christ's bitter death and passion, are at your disposal ; but you must rise from your lethargic sleep, you must shake off your indolence, and apply them to yourself. The well of living water is there ; you must draw for yourself and drink.

Now that you know the nature of, and the necessity for, works of satisfaction to God, a few words will not be out of place about the necessity for satisfaction to your neighbour, for the injuries which you have inflicted upon him. These injuries have affected his person, or his honour, or his goods. They have constituted you a debtor not only to God Whom you have offended by wronging your neighbour, but also to that neighbour himself from whom you have unjustly taken that which is his. By so doing, you have been guilty of sin, and by incurring its guilt, you have closed against yourself the gates of heaven, through which you cannot pass till that sin is pardoned, for nothing defiled can enter heaven. But certain conditions must be fulfilled before that gracious mercy can be extended to the sinner. One of these is, that whenever it is possible, restitution should be made of that which has been taken away. If you have taken away your neighbour's health by injuring him in any of his bodily powers, that wrong must be made good by compensation for the injury done ; if you have taken away his goods, you must indemnify him by giving back to him either the goods themselves, or their equivalent ; if you have blackened his reputation, you must restore it, by contradicting the false report, or by humbly asking pardon for the circulation of that which is not true. Your sin against him has been a sin of robbery. You have robbed him of his health, or of his wealth, or of his honour. Give back either that which you have taken, or its equivalent. If you cannot, then only can you be excused from this act of justice ; but till it is accomplished either in act or in desire, there is no pardon for you : "Heaven," says St. Paul, "is not for robbers".

From all that we have said upon the subject of satisfaction, you have seen both its nature and its necessity. Therefore, when preparing for confession, make a firm resolve not only to accomplish the penance imposed by the priest, but of your own free will to undertake works of satisfaction. You can say some fervent prayers every day in expiation of your sins ; you can give some little alms to the poor ; you can inflict on yourself some slight mortification at table ; or, better still, you can mortify yourself by abstaining from sin. Thus, you will be doing what you are able, to apply to yourself the merits of Christ, and He Who is so generous, so ready to be appeased, will apply to your feeble, worthless works, the infinite merits of His precious blood. These will wipe out the debt that is owing to God. They will procure for you a remission not only of the guilt, and of the eternal punishment due to that guilt, but will lessen the amount of temporal punishment which must be undergone here ; nay, they may even quite blot it out, and leave nothing to be burnt up by the penal fires of Purgatory.

PRAYER.

DURING the course of these Lectures, we have frequently spoken to you of the malignity of the evil spirits, and of their determination to work your ruin. We have often called your attention to that of which you yourself must be painfully conscious, the sluggishness of the human will to practise virtue, and its weakness in resisting vice. We have over and over again warned you against the snares which are laid to entangle your feet. As a remedy for these and many other moral ills, we have everywhere and always pointed out to you two remedies, the holy Sacraments and prayer—prayer, to obtain for you grace and to prepare you for the worthy reception of these divine gifts ; the Sacraments, to feed and augment the grace obtained by prayer. But in speaking of prayer, we have only incidentally, and as it were by the way, treated of it. That treatment is not sufficient for so important a subject. Therefore, we think that it is now time to give a closer study

and a wider development to it than we have, up to the present time, been able to devote.

Let us, then, to-day ask ourselves three questions : "What is prayer ? Why do we pray ? In how many ways may we pray ?" After answering these, we shall be able with more profit, to enter into further details upon this all-important subject.

Prayer is usually defined to be "the lifting up of the soul to God". It may be said to be a conversation of the soul with Him, an audience granted by Him to hear all that it has to say, all that it requires Him to do for it. In that audience, it has an opportunity of paying its duties to Him, and of obtaining from Him all that of which it stands in need. It may adore Him with all the fervour of its heart ; it may love Him with all its affections ; it may adhere to Him with all its will. To Him it may express its grateful thanks for the countless favours which it has received ; petition for those graces of which it feels the necessity pressing upon it ; and explain the miseries under which it groans. To have leave to do this, is no slight privilege. We look upon it as an honour to be noticed by, and to be allowed to converse with a Bishop. We should deem ourselves fortunate indeed, if the same favour were granted us by the holy Father, the head of all other Bishops, and the Vicar of Christ. From a worldly point of view, we should be pleased beyond measure to be introduced to, and to hold converse with our Sovereign. Men of the world regard this as an honour so great, that they would give anything to have it conferred upon them. Now, what is the friendship, the familiar intercourse with the greatest magnates of the earth, compared with that which we enjoy when we pray ? They are only creatures ; God is the Lord and Master of them all. In His sight they are but as a drop of water compared with the vast ocean, as a grain of sand compared with the universe. All that they have is His. Their dignity, their virtue, their nobility of character, their beauty, their power to attract, their learning, are but scintillations of the infinite perfection of His almighty being.

If intercourse with the great and noble refines and elevates,

what may we look for from our intercourse with God? We may confidently expect that some of His perfection will be imparted to us. For in prayer we see God, in a dark manner, indeed, but yet it may be called a vision of Him. We see His goodness, His power, His wealth of virtue. Also, we cannot, after this vision of Him, but look upon ourselves. There we see evil, weakness, poverty; and from the contemplation of them there springs a petition for freedom from these ills, as naturally as words of earnest entreaty for alms spring to a beggar's lips when he finds himself in the presence of a rich and benevolent man. How infinitely good is Our God, to put at our disposal so easy a means of ennobling ourselves, of enriching ourselves, and of filling our hearts with graces which will ensure our eternal happiness!

Why do we pray? The obvious answer which at once suggests itself to every one is, that in consequence of our prayer we may obtain graces and favours from God. But this is only one of the purposes for which we lift our hearts in prayer to Him. There are others, a knowledge of which will be serviceable in guiding you to the accomplishment of your duty in this respect. God is the first cause of all things, their preserver, their ruler, the ultimate object for which He called them into being. Therefore, your first duty is to prostrate yourself before Him, and offer up to Him the adoration of your heart and of your soul. He is the most perfect being. He is perfection itself. Therefore, to Him is due the amplest meed of praise from all His creatures. He is the most munificent benefactor of the human race. To Him man owes all that he has, whether in body or in soul, in material or in spiritual goods. How then can man do otherwise than pour out to Him, from a grateful heart, the thanks which from a generous spirit will spring up as naturally as water does from a fountain.

God is rich, and we are poor. The contemplation of His wealth, and the knowledge of our poverty, induce us to employ our prayer for another purpose besides that of adoring, praising, and thanking Him. We feel ourselves compelled to ask for something, and our petition looks first to God and then

to ourselves. Seeing how perfect He is, how loving and deserving of love, the soul prays that all men may adore and love and serve Him as much as, nay even far more than, it adores and loves and serves Him. Then contemplating itself, its poverty, its weakness, its many miseries, it asks Him to enrich it with an abundance of spiritual graces ; to strengthen its will ; to give relief to the ills under which it is smarting, in this vale of tears. While humbly petitioning for an outpouring of spiritual favours from the treasury of heaven, Our good Father does not wish us to forget our material wants, for these also are satisfied by the hand of God. Therefore, if poverty and ruin are threatening those who are dear to you ; if sickness is ravaging your home ; if misfortunes are falling upon your friends ; if death is standing by ready to strike them, lift up your voice and cry unto God with all the strength of your heart. He can give wealth and avert ruin ; He can heal all diseases ; He can change misfortune into prosperity ; He is Lord of even death. But to all such petitions as these, you must not expect an answer corresponding to your wishes. These favours which you ask may be blessings, or they may be curses. Therefore, there is always in them the condition : "if it should please God". In other petitions, however, such as for graces and spiritual favours, you need put no condition, for God will most certainly give to you what you ask : "All things whatsoever you ask in My name, He will give to you".

After defining for you what prayer is, and giving you the various reasons why you should pray, all that remains to be said, at present, is to explain to you the two ways in which you may offer up your prayer to God. As God is a spirit and knows all things, there is no need of words to communicate to Him our wants and our wishes. By a purely spiritual act, the soul is able to unite itself with Him, to converse with Him, and to be most intimately united with Him. This species of prayer is called *mental*, for the simple reason that it is made without the assistance of any of the bodily organs. A second mode or way of praying to God, is by the use of words to express the ideas and the wishes of our soul. This is called *vocal* prayer, because made by the aid of the voice. Both

kinds are exceedingly necessary and useful. By means of mental prayer the soul is, as it were, furnished with a powerful light which it is able to turn into and upon all the recesses of its being, illuminating the darkness, exposing to view the wounds, and discovering the dangers which threaten, or which actually beset, the soul. By this introspection, it acquires that most necessary of all other branches of science, the knowledge of self. From that knowledge, what a contempt of self springs up within it! What a high idea of God does it inspire! What fervour and earnestness does it stir up! What intensity does it enable the heart to throw into its petitions!

But if we can communicate with Our God, by means of a mental operation, unaided by words, what is the use of vocal prayer with its innumerable formularies? The use of vocal prayer, or its necessity, is very great, notwithstanding the superiority of that which is purely mental, a superiority which seems to dispense with the less perfect kind of prayer. For, it is the step by which we rise to mental prayer; it helps us to keep away distractions; it enables us to worship God with our bodily powers as well as with our mental faculties. Hence, Our Lord did not disdain to use it, and to give us a formula to be employed in vocal prayer. For these reasons, it is to be held in high esteem, and to be used by even those who are proficients in mental prayer. But remember, that vocal prayer must not be merely vocal. The mind, the soul, must be in the words. These words, if soulless, cannot mount to the throne of God; for "words without thoughts never to heaven go". Therefore, while praying with your lips, let your heart go with your words. Let your prayer be "a lifting up" of your heart to God. Adore Him, praise Him, thank Him. Ask Him for all that of which you stand in need. Pray to Him with your mind; pray to Him with your lips, uttering the thoughts and the sentiments of your mind; and especially pray that He may infuse into your heart a spirit of prayer, and give you the grace to acquire a *habit* of prayer. He who gains this, may be morally certain of eternal salvation.

NECESSITY FOR PRAYER.

LIKE Martha, we worry and make ourselves anxious about many things. We are troubled about our studies ; about the career which we ought to choose for ourselves ; about our temporal well-being, and about a thousand other things which each of us will himself know best. All important as these matters may seem to us, they are but trivial when compared with a subject which ought to be for us a source of incessant care. This is our eternal salvation which Our divine Lord has emphatically declared to be "the one thing necessary". Can this be secured by our own unaided efforts, by our persevering energy, and by the indomitable tenacity of our will ? No ; these it is true contribute something towards success ; but after all, our salvation is the work of divine grace, which takes our willingness to help ourselves as the foundation on which to build up the work of our sanctification. How, then, is grace to be obtained ? It is obtained by prayer. We must ask for it, and it will be given to us. Let us, then, in this Lecture endeavour to impress upon ourselves the necessity for prayer.

You will occasionally meet with men who altogether deny the necessity for prayer. They look upon it as an impiety to attempt, by means of prayer, to alter that which God in His wisdom has determined to happen, or which He will allow to happen. "He is infinitely wise," they say, "therefore, He has no need of your prayer to acquaint Him with your necessities ; infinitely good, therefore, He needs not your petitioning ; infinitely powerful, therefore, He cannot be swayed by the cries of mortal man." This is all quite true, but it is beside the mark ; it does not touch the necessity for prayer. For since, with the exception of the eternal laws of right and of wrong, the decrees of God are mutable, that is to say, dependent upon some condition, it is not impious for us to pray to Him for the obtaining of that good, or for the averting of that evil, each of which favours may depend upon the condition of our praying for it. So, also, though He is well aware of our necessities, eager to relieve them, and

omnipotent to carry into effect His divine will, He may, and, as we shall see, He does actually will us to show and to acknowledge our dependence upon Him, by means of humble prayer. For, being master of His own gifts, He can attach to them certain conditions without the fulfilment of which they will not be bestowed. One of these conditions, and the chief of them, is that they should be asked for. If we ask for them, He will give them to us. If we knock at the door of His treasury, it will be opened to us. If we want anything, we must seek it, and He will enable us to find it. Therefore, on our *asking*, on our *knocking*, on our *seeking*, that is to say, on our prayer, depends the granting of the benefits, the gifts, the favours of God.

It is so with men. They will grant us favours and bestow gifts upon us, if we are at the pains of complying with the conditions which they have laid down. It is so with many of the most ordinary necessities of life. We can secure for ourselves certain advantages, if we fulfil the conditions which will bring us within their reach. We can slake our thirst at a well, if we will turn the handle and hoist the bucket. We can cross a river, if we will step into a boat and use the oars. We can reach the metropolis, if we will buy a ticket and enter the railway carriage. So is it, we say again, with the favours of God. He gives them, on condition that we pray for them. Hence the necessity for prayer.

To impress more deeply upon us that necessity, Our divine Lord spoke of the unjust judge who, though he feared neither God nor man, yet yielded to the importunity of the poor widow who persevered in asking. He told the people how the seller of bread, though he had closed his shop and had retired to rest, was forced to rise and give to a customer what he wanted, simply because the man continued to knock and to give him no peace till his necessities were satisfied. "Ask," He says, "and you shall receive." Hence, our obtaining of graces, depends upon our prayer. Consequently, St. Paul urges his converts: "To pray without ceasing . . . for this is the will of God".¹ No wonder, then, that Our Lord, Who came on

¹ 1 Thess. v. 17.

earth to save us, so earnestly and so frequently throughout the Gospel, invites and urges us to pray with our whole heart to God. It is the condition on which the grace of His copious redemption is applied to our souls. Therefore its necessity, and the reason of His urgency in moving us to avail ourselves of this easy means to secure our salvation.

As if to emphasise still more His frequently reiterated precept of prayer, and to impress upon us its necessity, He had recourse to the constraining force of His own personal example. That example shows us, in the most unmistakable manner, that in every conjuncture of our lives He wishes us to make use of prayer. Before He began His missionary career He retired into solitude, and for forty days gave Himself up to an uninterrupted communion with His heavenly Father. After that assiduous preparation, He entered upon the labours of the last three years of His earthly career. The days were spent in journeying, in teaching, in healing the sick, in comforting the sorrowful, in reclaiming sinners, and then the greater part of the night was devoted to prayer. When the multitude, charmed with His wisdom and filled with admiration at His marvellous works, would have taken Him by force and proclaimed Him King, He fled away from the honour which they would have conferred upon Him, and retired into the mountain to pray. After His last supper, He prayed for His Apostles ; He prayed in a special manner for Peter, that His faith might never fail ; and when the agony of dread and repugnance was upon Him, He prayed only the longer. On the Cross, He prayed for those who were mocking Him and causing His death. His last cry was a prayer to His heavenly Father.

With this example before their eyes, and with His precepts so continually ringing in their ears, it cannot surprise us to find His Apostles given up to the exercise of prayer. Fired with a deep sense of its necessity, in consequence of His earnest exhortations to pray, they asked Him to teach them the heavenly science of prayer. After His death, they retired with His blessed Mother into that upper chamber in Jerusalem, and there in fervent prayer awaited the coming of the

Holy Ghost. In the writings which they sent to the various Churches founded by them, no precept is more frequently repeated than that of continual prayer. Hence, if on the subject of the necessity for prayer we needed any other proof than the precept of Christ, this practice of it both by the Apostles and by their Divine Master, would furnish us with one of the most convincing that it is possible for the human mind to receive.

But if the precept of Jesus Christ and His own most brilliant example did not convince us of this necessity, there is one consideration which cannot fail to force it upon us, and that is the consideration of the many miseries which press upon us, and under their grievous burden crush us to the earth. It needs no process of reasoning, no proof supported by unquestionable authorities, to convince us that they require relief, and that the way to procure it, is to go to those who are able to lift the load from our shoulders. We *feel* our miseries, and, therefore, cry out for something to assuage their smart. The outcome of this feeling, is prayer. Look, then, into yourself and contemplate your own indigence. Whether you consider yourself upon the side of nature or of grace, there is naught but want, poverty, needs which cry out to be satisfied. Your life, your health, the faculties of your mind, the powers of your body, all depend upon God. Without His concurrence, you could not live, you would decay and die; your mind could not think, your body could not move.

But it is particularly on the side of grace that our poverty is most appalling. Our Lord Himself contemplating it, plainly tells us, that without Him we can do *nothing*. We cannot say a good word, nor so much as think a good thought which will be profitable unto eternal life, unless He gives us His all-powerful aid. Our mental powers are weak in matters pertaining to our salvation. They mistake light for darkness, and darkness for light. They oftentimes regard as good, that which is evil, and as evil, that which is good. Therefore, we need the light of His mind to illumine our darkness, that we may see aright, and the strength of His will to enable us, when we see what is right, to choose it and to adhere to it.

On every side there are enemies, numerous, vigorous, indefatigable, assaulting us and plotting our ruin. Are not these reasons more than sufficient to convince you of the necessity for prayer? Do they not urge you to cry out unto the strong, living God, to help and to save? Any one who knows all this, and who then cannot see the need in which he stands of prayer, is beyond the reach of reason and of argument.

Therefore, be determined to become a man of prayer. You cannot fail to make this resolution, if you bear in mind the precept of Christ, and consider that any means of salvation so strongly and so frequently urged by Him as incessant prayer has been, must be for us of the last necessity. If you need anything further, look upon the example which He gives you. His prayer, though unnecessary for Himself, was continual. He prayed for you; He prayed in order to encourage you to pray. But if the precept and the example of your Lord are not sufficient to move you, then let the sentiment of your own most pressing needs force you, for your own interest, to lift up your voice and to cry for relief unto Him Who never yet turned a deaf ear to any one that with his whole heart appealed to Him for mercy, for grace, and for help to win the prize of eternal life.

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

IF we consider the powers at work in the world around us, we may roughly divide them into three classes, physical, intellectual, and moral. To estimate the force of any of these, we usually look at the effects which it is able to produce. Thus, for instance, we are able to judge of the might that slumbers in the Nasmyth hammer, when we see the thin plate which, at a single stroke, it has fashioned out of a block of iron or of steel. So, also, we are able to gauge a man's intellectual, or his moral force, by the influence which his thought has over the mind of the nation, or the sway which his will is able to exercise over the wills of his fellow-men. Therefore, a similar process will enable us to form a correct idea of the power of prayer. We must look at the effects which it

produces, and seeing these, we shall conclude that by the will of God there is conceded to it a power that is well-nigh omnipotent.

We shall find a wealth of instances to support this conclusion, if we even casually look through the pages of the Old and New Testaments.

When God wished to deliver His people from the Egyptian bondage under which they had for so many years been groaning, He chose as the instrument with which to work out this deed of almighty power, His servant Moses. This wonderful man had many qualities which fitted him to be a great leader, but to none of these did he owe so much as to his gift of prayer. He was a man much given to prayer, and by the instrumentality of that divine gift, he worked marvels of power, from the day that he went before the oppressor of his people to petition him to let them go, till that whereon having led them within sight of the Promised Land, he went up into the mountain to feast his eyes upon its beauty, and then to pass to his Fathers. After each of the plagues with which, by the command of God, he struck Pharaoh and his subjects, that obdurate Monarch besought him to intercede with God for its cessation. Moses complied with his request, and, in answer to his prayer, the loathsome frogs died out of the land ; the swarms of flies were carried away ; the destructive hail and fire ceased in an instant ; and the locusts were, by an impetuous wind, swept into the Red Sea.

At last the people were allowed to go, when the Angel of death had struck down the first-born of every Egyptian house throughout the land. In their march to the Promised Land, a mighty obstacle stood in their way, and the hosts of Pharaoh pressed upon them from behind. Before them stretched out the glittering waters of the Red Sea. How was that vast multitude to be ferried across ? Only a miracle could effect their safe transfer to the opposite shore. Their leader prayed to the Lord, and promptly from that fountain of mercy came their deliverance, and the removal of that which blocked their forward march, and seemingly shut them up in the hand of the enraged and hotly pursuing Monarch. At the command

of God, Moses stretched forth his rod over the waters and divided them, so that the people passed over dry-shod, while their enemies, boldly entering after them, were swallowed in the waters which, as long as the children of Israel were passing through, had stood like walls of crystal on each side.

Having escaped the hands of their bitterest persecutor, they shortly afterwards encountered the hosts of Amalec. Josue the captain of the army, fought them on the plain, while Moses, ascending the mountain, prayed to God for victory. As long as he prayed, Israel prevailed ; but if for a moment his outstretched arms sank in weariness to his sides, the enemy gained an advantage over the children of Israel. Therefore, Aaron and Hur upheld the Prophet's hands till evening, and thus his prayer secured for the army of the Lord a glorious victory.

At Mount Sinai, God called His illustrious servant to its cloud-covered summit, that there He might deliver to him the tables of the law. While he was absent in converse with the Lord, the people fell into idolatry. God bade Moses go down in haste. Knowing that the people had sinned, he at once began to beseech for them the mercy of God. That prayer of his, held the omnipotent hand of God. To show us the power of prayer, the Almighty said to His suppliant servant : "I see that this people is stiff-necked. Let Me alone that My wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them."¹ But Moses would not desist from his prayer. That humble supplication held the hand of God from striking, and appeased His wrath, so that He did not carry into effect His threat to destroy them.

At the prayer of Josue, the successor of Moses, the sun, according to the expression of the Scripture, "stood still," that he might have light to pursue and slay the enemy that opposed him in the reduction of the land given to Israel by the Lord.

All these are wondrous miracles worked by the power of prayer for the benefit of the nation at large. But it is equally powerful when exercised for the advantage of individuals. King Ezechias was threatened with death. A prophet was

¹ Exod. xxxii. 9, 10.

sent to tell him that he should die. But, nothing daunted by the words of the Seer, he betook himself to prayer, and with all his heart besought the Lord that his life might be spared. God listened to his humble petition, and prolonged his days.

At the prayer of Elias, Almighty God shut up the heavens so that for well-nigh four years there fell no rain throughout the dominions of the impious Achab. When the people once more returned at the Prophet's earnest call, and chose God by rejecting and slaying the priests of Baal, he once more lifted up his voice in prayer, and obedient to his wishes, God sent down upon the thirsty land a very deluge of refreshing rain.

Such was the power of prayer under the old dispensation. Under the new order of things, which did not destroy but which perfected what had preceded it, prayer acquired if possible an access of power, and it was more readily listened to by God. In the New Testament we have many instances of the readiness, nay, the eagerness, with which the Incarnate Word, listened to and complied with the petitions addressed to Him. Shortly after He had entered upon His public career, He was invited with His Apostles to a marriage feast at Cana of Galilee. His Mother also was present as a guest, and perceiving that the wine of their hosts had failed, prayed to Him by a mere suggestion. She simply stated the need that had fallen upon their friends: "Son, they have no wine". His hour was not yet come; nevertheless, because she had stated her wishes, in that modest, humble way which went straight to His heart, He presently performed His first miracle, by changing the water into wine.

Later on during His public life, a poor wretched leper from whom all fled away in terror, came up to the place where He was standing, and falling down at His feet adored Him, saying with deep faith: "Lord, if Thou willest, Thou canst make me clean". Without a moment's hesitation, He replied: "I will; be thou made clean". Straightway the leper was healed of his horrible disease, and went away glorifying and praising God.

As Jesus was going, on one occasion, into Jericho, a blind man sat by the wayside, begging. But hearing the noise of

the multitude that preceded Our Lord, he inquired what might be the meaning of the unusual concourse, and learning that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he cried aloud to Him of Whose goodness and readiness to help the poor and the afflicted he had already heard so much: "Son of David, have pity on me". But not being relieved, he followed as best he could, either clinging to some passer-by, or being led by some charitable person, till at last Jesus catching the plaintive accents of his voice, ordered him to be brought into His presence. "What willest thou," said He to him, "that I do unto thee?" But he said: "Lord, that I may see". Jesus at once replied: "Receive thy sight," and straightway he saw, and gave glory to God.

From these and many more instances which might be cited both from the Old Testament and from the New, it is evident that the statement which we made at the beginning, is not a rhetorical exaggeration, but the sober truth—the power of prayer is well-nigh omnipotent. This God-like force, Our merciful Lord has put into our hands. With it we can effect anything that we desire. "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name," says that loving Master, "that I will do." Can any promise be more encouraging? Surrounded as we are by difficulties of every kind, here is a means with which we can cleave for ourselves through them all, a broad and easy passage. We wish to succeed in the world, and material obstacles stand in our way. Prayer can remove them from our path. We desire to advance in our studies; but our memory is weak, our intelligence is slow. We fail and lose heart. Prayer can flood our minds with light, and in one moment teach us more than ten years of study could impart. We are struggling to be virtuous; but our will is weak, the devil is strong, and tyrannous is the force of habit. Have courage! Prayer is all-powerful. It will strengthen the will; it will defeat the devil; it will break down the might of habit. Therefore, pray with all the energy at your command, and you also will be able to testify, by personal experience, that it puts into your hands the power of the Omnipotent.

QUALITIES OF PRAYER.

PRAYER, as we have seen, has a very great influence over Almighty God. It moves Him to be merciful to us, and apparently prevails over His omnipotence. Of its necessity for us we have no doubt; for, if we are without spot or stain, we need it to preserve untarnished the white robe received in Baptism, and if we have unfortunately plunged into sin and besmeared that robe with the filthy mire of wickedness, we require it to draw us out and cleanse us from all defilement. But if it is, at one and the same time, so necessary for us, and so powerful to obtain all that we desire, how does it come to pass that of the multitudes that pray so few seem to obtain that for which they crave? The fault is not in prayer, but in those who pray. They do not receive from God that for which they ask, because they do not put into their prayer those qualities which will carry it to the throne of God, and make its voice heard by the ears of Our merciful Father.

Let us, then, examine what those qualities are, that knowing them, we may make an effort to endow our petitions with them, and thus render our prayer efficacious.

To convey to the minds of other men the thoughts and the desires that are within us, we must first direct our own mind to them, and to the ideas which we wish to instil into them. This is only another way of saying that we must *attend* to them, and to that which we are addressing to them. So also in bringing our wishes before the notice of God, we must force our minds to advert to Him, and to that which we are saying to Him. This is called *attention*. It is the first requisite for prayer. It is, in fact, an essential element of prayer; for if it is absent, prayer ceases to be prayer. It is then nothing more than a meaningless lip-service, a body without a soul. Therefore it is incapable of mounting to God. If you doubt this, just consider what prayer is. Is it not defined to be a lifting up of the soul to God? If there is no attention in it, there is no uplifting of the soul, and, consequently, no prayer. Hence the necessity for attention. But you will say: "If this is true, there are very few who pray; for the great bulk of men

are, as a rule, very much distracted during prayer". In answer to this, we say: "If the distractions are deliberate and wilful, their prayer not only is undoubtedly not a prayer, but it is sinful. But if these wanderings of mind, or if this inattention to what they are saying is displeasing to them, or, in other words, is involuntary, their prayer is not lost. It is truly prayer, and it will be accepted by God."

That acceptance, however, depends upon the presence of several other qualities, the chief of which is humility. The soul which comes before God as a suppliant, must be animated with a lowly spirit. Any other is an abomination in His sight. He resists the proud, but yields to the contrite and humble of heart. "To whom," He asks, "shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My words?"¹ Any one who presents himself before Him, and who is full of himself and of his own worth, will go forth from His sight empty-handed. It is only those that are filled with a deep sense of their own unworthiness, that look upon themselves as the worst and least of men, that strike their breasts and ask pardon for their sins, that leave the audience chamber of Our God, cleansed of their defilement, and overflowing with abundance of graces. These were the sentiments with which St. Peter was filled when, deeply impressed by the miraculous draught of fishes, he perceived Our Lord's divinity, and contemplated his own worthlessness: "Depart from me," said he, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" His lowly estimate of himself drew only the more closely to him that Mighty One, compared with Whom the Apostle saw how small, how weak, how worthless he was. It caused Jesus to open out to him the treasures of His mercy, and to raise him to honours from which his lowliness shrank away. Such, also, must be the sentiments of those who present themselves before the throne of mercy, to petition for favours and graces.

Besides being attentive and humble, our prayer must be full of faith or confidence, otherwise it will never receive from

¹ Isaias lxvi. 2.

God a favourable answer. "Let not that man," says St. James "who wavereth," that is to say, who has not confidence in God, "let him not think that he shall receive anything from the Lord."¹ Doubt or distrust at once shuts up the treasury of God. He will do us no favour unless we have complete faith or confidence in Him. During His earthly pilgrimage, Our Lord would never work a miracle for any one who had not this faith. It is expressly stated in the Gospel, that Jesus wrought not many miracles in His own country, because of the unbelief of its inhabitants.² Also you will notice, in reading the Scripture, how frequently He says to those who ask Him for favours: "Believest thou that I can do this thing?" Hence, also, we see that He often attributes to their faith the wonders which He worked for them.

When the Centurion heard from His lips that He would come and heal his servant, that humble man did not wish to trouble Him, but said: "Say only the word, and my servant shall be healed". Our Lord marvelling at his faith, said to him: "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee".³ To the woman who touched the hem of His garment, He said: "Thy faith hath made thee whole".⁴ When the Chananean woman asked for the deliverance of her daughter from the molestations of the devil, He paid no attention to her, but walked on as if He had not heard. Nothing daunted, she pursued after Him, crying out her heartfelt prayer, till the Apostles remonstrated with Him, and besought Him to grant her petition, and thus to silence her. With apparent harshness He replied: "It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs". Taking up His figurative language, she quickly made answer: "Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters". This answer drew from His blessed lips these consoling words: "O woman! great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou willest".⁵ Therefore, if you wish to be heard, you must pray with a complete trust, faith, confidence that your

¹ St. James, i. 7.

² St. Matt. xiii. 58.

³ St. Matt. viii. 7, 8, 13.

⁴ ix. 22.

⁵ St. Matt. xv. 22-28.

good Father will both hear and grant your petition. No one has ever yet gone to Him, in that confiding spirit, without at last obtaining from Him that of which he stood in need.

Take notice that we have said "without at last obtaining" what he asked for. God does not always *at once* grant our petitions, as is evident from the way in which He conducted Himself with the Chananean woman. Hence the necessity for another quality, most necessary for those who approach Him for the purpose of obtaining His graces and favours. This is *perseverance*. The Evangelist St. Luke expressly states, that it was to insinuate the necessity for this quality in our prayers, that caused Jesus to address to the people one of His most instructive Parables. He told them that there was, in a certain city, a poor widow who had been grievously injured by some one who was hostile to her. Her only means of redress was to appeal to the courts of justice. But unfortunately for her there presided over these a judge who had no regard for any one who, like her, could not buy from him a favourable sentence. Our blessed Lord says of him: "He feared not God, nor regarded man". Nevertheless to him she made her appeal, "to be avenged of her adversary". But to no purpose. Day after day she appeared before him, always uttering the same petition; and day after day he repulsed her; he would not do her justice. Still she persevered. No rebuff seemed to damp her ardour. Thus, a considerable time passed away. At last the judge could no longer bear her importunity. Speaking to himself one day, he said: "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me, I will avenge her, lest continually coming, she weary me".¹ This is the way in which God would have us behave with Him. We must go on asking, and at last He will do that which we desire.

To impress this conviction still more deeply upon our minds, He told His Apostles, after He had taught them that formula of prayer which after Him is called the "Lord's Prayer," that they must act towards God as that man did towards the

¹ St. Luke xviii. 4, 5.

friend to whom he went in the night, in order to obtain bread wherewith to refresh some one who had unexpectedly come to his house. The good man had already retired to rest, and on the loud knocking of his friend, appeared at the window. As soon as he became aware of his errand, he pointed out to him the inconvenience to which it would put him to descend to the lower chamber, in order to satisfy him, and thereupon went back again to his couch. Now, said Our blessed Lord, "if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend ; yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many [loaves] as he needeth".¹ So will it be with God. He does not at once answer us, because He wishes to try us, to make us understand the value of His graces, and to fill our hearts with a more ardent desire, and a greater esteem of that which we cannot obtain except by persevering labour and effort.

From this you will see, that not every prayer is answered, but only that prayer which has in it those qualities which will carry it to the ear of God, and make it worthy of His notice. Therefore, try to infuse into your prayer the various qualities which we have brought under your notice. First of all, try to make it *attentive* by fixing your thoughts on God, and by attending to that which you say. Mere words fall to the ground ; but words vivified by thoughts fly up ; they pierce the clouds and reach the throne of God. Offer up these *attentive* prayers with all *humility*, acknowledging your own unworthiness and sinfulness. Yet, let not the contemplation of your own baseness discourage you. Be full of *confidence* in the mercy and the goodness of God. Then go on *persevering* with your prayer. "Ask, and you shall receive ; seek, and you shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you." These are the words of Christ. They are the promise of Truth. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but these words shall not pass away. Whatsoever you ask in a prayer that has these qualities, will most certainly be given to you.

¹ St. Luke xi. 8.

SCHOOLBOY HONOUR.

EVERY Catholic school is one of our Lord's vineyards, in which He plants the bright souls of young boys that He may train them in virtue, and prepare them to live for ever in the kingdom of His Father. What an object, then, of the tenderest solicitude must a school such as ours be both to Him and to us, whom He has appointed to be its guardians ! First to Him, because in it He has placed you, and by so doing has destined you to do for Him a work which no other than you can accomplish ; next, to us, not only because of the reason just mentioned, but because each of you is the object of a mother's sacred love ; on each of you a father's hopes are built ; in each of you the expectations, the interests and the affections of a whole family are centred. Therefore we feel it our duty to guard you with the most jealous care, to cultivate with unflagging diligence both your souls and your intelligences, to watch over you with unwearying vigilance.

But in spite of our most jealous care, our unwearying diligence and a vigilance as wakeful in its degree as is that of Him who slumbers not nor sleeps in His unceasing watch over Israel, we cannot keep the enemy out. Under the cover of darkness he glides in. Having entered he employs as agents to accomplish his designs those whom he has already inoculated with the virus of evil. He sends them about among the innocent, the ignorant, the unwary, oversowing our lessons of piety and of virtue with the tares of vice, so that sometimes as we look upon the havoc which they have wrought we are forced with deepest sorrow to exclaim : " An enemy hath done this ".

Now, I ask you, what would you do if you discovered one of these emissaries of hell carrying on his devil's work among the boys of this School ? Would you, like the servants of the householder, go straightway and " inform " those who are able to counteract the mischief, or would you hold your tongue and say : " It is no affair of mine ; let Superiors look to it " ? Concerning matters of this nature there are often

among boys very false notions of "*honour*," notions which lead me to address to you a few words on the subject of schoolboy honour as it regards yourselves, your conduct towards one another, and your method of action in the circumstances which I have just mentioned.

By the word "*honour*" we mean a chivalrous feeling or sentiment springing from the principle of never thinking, or desiring, or speaking, or doing anything unbecoming the dignity of an upright, conscientious, Christian boy. From this definition we see that honour is naturally divided into what we may call personal honour and honour with respect to others. At the root of both there should be found the Christian principles of charity and self-restraint, to raise the merely natural virtue into the realm of the supernatural, thus making Christian honour worthy of a supernatural reward. If these be found there they will give to the sentiment, or, if you prefer it, to the principle of honour, a strength, a stability and an influence which the merely natural virtue can never have ; they will make the honourable boy feel what is dis honourable not only as a wound, but as an infraction of God's holy law. Therefore, when any thought discreditable to his neighbour presents itself before his mind, he drives it away with the disdain which it deserves ; when any desire springs up in his heart to say or to do anything unbecoming the dignity of a Christian, he stifles it ; when any word which might either offend or wound a companion starts to his lips, he suffers it not to pass that threshold ; when any deed derogatory of the lofty ideal which he has set before himself is suggested to him, he never permits it to become a reality. Consequently the honour of which we speak is a keen sense of what is congruous and befitting the Christian character ; it is an aversion to all that is base and unchristian.

Many examples might be cited to illustrate what I mean, but of these I will select only two which will appeal to the ideal of honour prevalent among schoolboys.

"I remember," said Lord Ardmillan, addressing the boys of one of our great public Schools, "I remember being present on your ground at a cricket match. The Eleven of the School

were in the midst of their innings and playing an uphill game. A fine, spirited youth was at the wicket, with his eye well in, hitting freely and well. The wicket-keeper caught the ball. 'How is that, umpire?' said he. 'Not out,' said the umpire. 'Yes, I am,' said the youth, 'it touched my bat and I felt it,' and he walked off from the wicket amid the cheers of every one in the field. Many cricketers would have observed silence. No rule of the game that I know would have been broken by accepting the umpire's decision, but the spirit of the noble, ingenuous youth spurned the deceit and led him to disclose the fact. That is true honour.

"I will give you another instance of still older date, illustrating the same thing. Long ago, in the days of State lotteries, two young men agreed to purchase each a lottery ticket. One who lived in London was to buy both tickets, one for each in his own name, and he did so. The time for drawing the prizes came, and the one in town wrote to his friend in the country: 'Your ticket has turned up a £5000 prize'. 'How do you know it is mine?' writes his friend. 'Because,' wrote the other, 'when I bought the two tickets I put a little mark in pencil on the back of the ticket intended for you, and that has gained the prize.' No human being but himself could have known it, yet he disclosed the truth and gave up the prize because honour prompted him to do so."¹

Such is the outcome of this principle of honour among boys, in matters which personally affect them, and, as you see from the examples adduced, it regulates their conduct in their dealings with their school-fellows also. An honourable boy will always deal honourably with them, for the principle prompting him never to think, or to say, or to do, or to desire anything unbecoming his own character will move him never to think, or to say, or to do, or to desire anything that would be dishonourable on his part towards them.

Let me point out to you a few instances in which this principle must be put in practice.

¹ *Address to the Boys of Merchiston Castle School.*

If any of your companions is punished for some fault committed by him, he has a right not to have that fault disclosed to those who are unacquainted with it. But by revealing the punishment inflicted, the fault itself is often made known, and his right to have it kept secret is invaded. Therefore, by making it known to others an injustice is done to him, and the revelation of it is an act of dishonour on the part of him who publishes it. Consequently, the principle of honour must seal the lips of a class with respect to the rest of the School, and of the School itself with respect to those who are not members of it.

Another and grosser act of dishonour is to reveal any secret intrusted to your keeping ; for nothing is a more evident sign of a mean, ungenerous, unprincipled nature. Boys oftentimes, in their ingenuousness and simplicity, confide to their school friends, the secrets of their home. They tell of the troubles which disturb its peace ; of the difficulties which press upon their parents ; of the faults committed by a brother or a relative ; of the sorrows which cast their dark shadows over it ; of the misfortunes which have wrecked its happiness. These things are a sacred deposit to be guarded with inviolable secrecy. Not a word concerning them must ever be breathed into the ear of any one else ; not a hint of their existence must be let fall. The person so trusted must look upon himself as a priest to whom a confession has been made. To recount these secrets to others is most dishonourable ; nay, it is an act so detestable that any one guilty of it would be overwhelmed with the withering scorn of the whole School.

Again, the principle of honour will effectually prevent any schoolboy from prying into the domestic affairs of his companions. If they confide these to his keeping, he must, as we have just said, regard them as a sacred deposit. To endeavour to find them out by playing the part of a detective, in order that having discovered them he may make them the subject of banter and annoyance is dishonourable in a schoolboy, and indeed in the case of any one else. Men of the world apply to any one so disposed a very strong epithet ; they call him a *cad*, a low, uncultured, vulgar-minded fellow,

incapable of seeing or of appreciating worth in any one, unless that worth is framed in something that gold can purchase ; one without the faculty of perceiving immaterial worth ; one who apparently does not know that true gentlemanliness consists in never doing a mean, or an ignoble, or an ungenerous action, of never thinking an unbecoming thought, or of uttering a word which would wound the susceptibilities of others. Therefore, an honourable boy will scorn to pry into the affairs of his school-fellows, or to play the detective, or to bring to light their family affairs. To him, every one that is truthful, brave, pure and kind, is a gentleman, his equal in the School, and probably his superior in the eyes of God. Such are some few of the instances in which Christian honour will cause him to keep inviolate faith with his companions.

I now come to a far more serious question concerning schoolboy honour. Is it honourable for him to keep faith with one who, from what he has either seen him do, or heard him say, he knows to be sowing the tares of his own corrupt heart in the hearts of his companions, and thus turning what ought to be a seminary of virtue into a school of vice ? Is it honourable, in his care, not to say one word about it, nor to inform those whose duty it is to prevent such a disaster to innocent souls ? There is no honour in screening him, but there is dishonour, there is sin, there is complicity in his guilt, a complicity for which he will have to answer before the throne of the Most High God. Is it dishonourable to crush the head of a viper that is about to fasten its poisonous fangs in the flesh of your brother ? Is it dishonourable to shoot a wolf, or to point out one who is infected with a deadly disease, or to extinguish a spark which may enkindle a ruinous conflagration ? Certainly not ! What, then, is a boy who either says or does evil among his companions ? He is a venomous serpent, infusing the virus of his own corrupt heart into the souls of God's innocent children. He is a famished wolf, slaying and devouring the lambs for which Christ died. He is a hideous leper, spreading disease and death among those who are full of spiritual life. He is a spark shot up from

hell, kindling in the hearts of others a fire that will lay in ruins the temple of the living God. Therefore, there is no honour in keeping faith with him ; there is dishonour ; there is complicity in his sin ; for by not denouncing him, there is a sort of acquiescence in his nefarious act.

Have you ever considered the hideous nature of its guilt ? If you have not, then let me try to help you to form for yourself some faint notion of it. It is the guilt of murdering the soul, for, by instilling into it the poison of his own wicked heart, he deprives it of divine grace, which is its life. By depriving it of divine grace, he mars one of God's most beautiful works ; he destroys what is of priceless worth ; he robs it of the glorious end for which God created it. The human soul is the work of the infinite power of God. It is an exact image of the Almighty Himself Who entrances with His beauty the angelic hosts of heaven. What then must be the beauty of the human soul ! It is of the same kind as that which graces the mighty spirits that stand before the great white throne. When St. John, in vision, beheld one of these, he fell down before that majestic presence, and he would have adored, thinking the Angel to be God Himself. No wonder that the soul is vested with this surpassing loveliness, for it is of infinite worth. Did not God Himself, for its sake become a little infant ; did He not live in obscurity ; did He not toil at the carpenter's bench for its sake ; did He not for it work miracles, preach a heavenly doctrine, establish the Church, institute Sacraments, and pour out His precious blood upon the Cross ? If all this is true, then the human soul is, in a sense, of infinite worth, for its redemption cost Jesus Christ, the God-man, His life. Yes, it is of so great worth that He looks upon it as a jewel to be for ever preserved in the kingdom of His Father.

How frightful, then, must be the sin by which that peerless work of almighty power is so utterly marred ! How diabolical the act which destroys that which cost Our Lord the last drop of His blood ! How irremediably wicked, since it may—unless repentance intervenes—perpetuate throughout eternity the ruin wrought during the fleeting hours of time ! The traveller

who looks upon the broken columns of the Parthenon at Athens can scarce repress the outburst of indignation that swells within him against the men who wrecked that monument of human genius, so time honoured, so vast, so beautiful. If you have ever stood in any of the ruined sanctuaries of our own land, and gazed with admiration upon their graceful arches, their lofty pillars, their exquisite carving, you will have felt some of this righteous anger against those who, for the sake of the lead protecting their roofs, have suffered them to fall into decay. Yet, what is the destruction of a material building compared with the ruin of a soul, the immaterial temple of the living God? Will that great God feel no indignation against the perpetrator of so foul a deed ; against the boy who has destroyed the child of His heart ; who has profaned the sanctuary in which He delighted to dwell ; who has defiled and overturned the altar whence there ascended to Him the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise? How, before the great judgment seat, shall that boy be able to meet the glance of His eyes, or to endure the withering scorn that will flash from them. Terrible is the wrath of God against him who has destroyed any of His children. By the mouth of the Prophet He tells us, " I will meet him like a bear deprived of her whelps,"¹ and speaking of such a one Our Lord Himself says : " It were better for him that he had never been born, or that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea ".²

Therefore, since he who by word or by deed, by counsel or by example, sows the vicious tares of his own corrupt heart in the hearts of his school-fellows, is a serpent infecting them with his venom, a ravening wolf, rending and tearing Christ's flock, a leper spreading abroad infection, an incendiary lighting up disastrous conflagrations, keep not faith with him. There is no honour in screening him, there is dishonour, there is horrible sin in so doing. Beware of him, lest you should prove one of his victims, and become

¹ Osee xiii. 8.

² St. Matt. xviii. 6.

one of the devil's agents, to sow his tares, and do his filthy work. In yourself personally, cultivate the principle of Christian honour. Never think, nor desire, nor say, nor do anything dishonourable, anything unbecoming the dignity of a Christian. Be honourable towards all your companions. Treat them as you yourself would wish to be treated. Then we shall never have to weep bitter tears over the ruin of some bright soul, of some innocent boy whose destruction will break the hearts of those to whom he is dear. We shall never have to say with sorrow and with indignation as we look upon the wreck of what is so dear to God and to us: "An enemy hath done this".

TIME.

WHAT a wonderful creation of God is time, of which men talk so lightly, and of which many of them make so little account! It comes and it goes. That portion of it which is gone, is no longer ours; that which is coming, does not belong to us; only the present moment can, with truth, be said to be really our own. It is out of these fleeting moments, which some one has picturesquely described as the lightning flashes "twixt two eternities," that the thread of our life is spun. Yet, brief as are these moments, it is upon the right employment of them that our eternal beatitude depends. They are, consequently, of priceless worth. Not one of them should be suffered to slip by uncared for. Each of them should be stamped with virtuous deeds, out of which the stones of our heavenly mansion must be built.

In order, then, to inspire you with a firm resolve to make a right use of the fleeting moments which make up the brief span of your earthly existence, we will put before you a few thoughts which will give you some faint idea of their priceless worth.

If you thoughtfully examine into the nature of time, and consider the momentous issues which depend upon a right use of it, you cannot fail to regard it as a precious gift of God, very limited in its duration, and, when once passed,

impossible to be recalled and devoted to the ends for which the great Master bestowed it. Its value begins to stand out clear before our eyes when we remember that, by right, time belongs only to those who have not sinned. The moment that any one is guilty of a grave transgression against the law of God, in that instant, his right to the possession of time ceases to exist. Such was the compact, if we may so speak, made in the beginning between man and his Maker. In that early stage of his existence, the law imposed upon him consisted but of one light command. The penalty for disobedience to it was death—a twofold death—first, in the cessation of time, and, secondly, in the rupture of that union between man and God, the maintenance of which constitutes the spiritual life of man's being. The words of God are clear: “In what day soever you shall eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil,” and by so eating shall transgress My express command, “in that day you shall die”. Why then, you will ask, did not the first sinners immediately cease to be, when they had set at naught the command of their Creator? It was because that merciful Father, foreseeing their rebellion, had preordained for it a remedy. The Eternal Word, consubstantial with the Father, was destined, in view of this defection from their Maker, to assume the human nature of these unstable creatures, and in that human nature to suffer and to die for their salvation, that time might be given them in which to secure their eternal destiny.¹

Therefore, time may be said to have been purchased for us at the price of the blood of Jesus Christ. Think of all that He suffered in order to win it for us! Think of His laborious life, His preaching, and His miracles. His agony in the garden forced through the pores of His body a sweat of blood; the cruel thorns caused a crimson stream to trickle from His sacred head; the nails opened for us fountains of salvation in His hands and His feet; the

¹ According to some theologians, the Word would have assumed our human nature even if our first parents had not fallen.

soldier's spear discovered for us the very source of His life and drained it of its last drop. All this blood is the price of that time which men employ to insult their God. Is it not, then, a precious jewel to be guarded with all care, an inestimable treasure to be husbanded as we should husband Our Saviour's life-blood?

If this be not enough to give you an adequate notion of the worth of time, perhaps a thought which will rouse your self-interest, will enable you to grasp its value. One moment of that time is enough to secure for you an eternity of bliss. For in that moment you may, by the grace of God, and through an act of sincere sorrow, utterly turn away from sin and unite yourself inseparably with God. That turning to Him causes the bonds in which you were held fast to burst from your limbs ; it makes the loathsome incrustation of your leprosy drop away from you ; it cleanses your spiritual being from every spot or stain contracted by the defilement of your vicious habits. You stand before God, a perfect image of Himself, and when the temporal debt, if any such remain, has been paid by the patient suffering which God shall send, you will be caught up into the embrace of your heavenly Father, to dwell with Him for ever. Therefore, that moment of time well employed has purchased for you an eternity. To you it is as valuable as eternity. It may, therefore, be said to be worth an eternity.

Time, then, is exceedingly precious, and as is the case with all precious things, there is very little of it, that is to say, it is very short in its duration. In creating time, God has dealt with it as He has dealt with the other works of His hands. He has not been prodigal with respect to it. As He created all other things "in measure and number and weight," so has He created time. It is measured out with infinite wisdom. He has fixed a determinate period for the world's existence ; He has marked out a limited circle for the life of the tiniest flower, the smallest insect, the meanest shrub ; He has counted out for us the pulsations of our hearts during our life-pilgrimage. Not one more, not one less, shall be our portion than has been decreed by His infinite wisdom :

"Thou hast appointed our bounds," says Job, "which cannot be passed".¹

This limitation of our days is owing to His infinite mercy. He willed time to be the term of our trial, the course which we have to run in order to win our crown. Therefore, He has made it very short, that the feeblest, the most cowardly may not be afraid to endure the strain of the contest. So short is it that the Scripture is lavish in comparisons which show us its brevity. As the shadow of a cloud hiding for a moment the brightness of the sun, as the rapid onward course of a messenger, as the swift flight of an eagle to its prey, as the transit of an arrow shot from the bow, such is the duration of that time allotted to us to prepare for eternity.

We admit all this, when we consider time with respect to our own worldly interests. If we have an ambition to win for ourselves honour, or a position of trust and emolument, if we desire to acquire learning, or to elaborate some scheme which needs patient research to bring it to a successful issue, then time, in our estimation, is not long enough. We husband it, we employ it well, we grudge even a moment devoted to anything else, which we then consider to be only secondary and unimportant. But when its brevity is urged upon us in connection with the tremendous interests at stake in securing our eternal salvation, few are those among us who can bring this home to their inmost hearts. There is always then plenty of time. A vista of future years opens out before the mind's eye, and time appears to be so long, so plentiful, that our vital, our all-important, our only interest is neglected, in the full conviction that it can afford to wait a favourable opportunity. Yet time rolls on, that time which is so precious and so short.

Turn your thoughts now, for a moment, to consider what happens when once time has passed away. Can you at will call it back and once again live through it, and having learnt by experience, turn it to good account? No; it is irrevocable.

¹ Job xiv. 5.

It will never return. Time once passed away, is like a costly ring which, as we sail over the ocean, slips from our finger and sinks amid the waves. It is as wine that is poured out and is drunk up by the thirsty earth. It is as a marble statue shattered by the hammer of an unthinking barbarian, a rare work of art which can never be replaced. But though time cannot be recalled, it may be repaired. Tears of true repentance will restore to us the treasure of God's grace lost by our sins ; they will undo the wrong-doing of youthful years ; they will reconstruct the fabric of holiness shattered by our evil deeds. Therefore, make speed to repair the loss of that precious, fleeting, irrevocable time of which you have been so prodigal. In the years which yet may be granted to you, see that you walk circumspectly. Be not, as in the past, unwise, but wise. Redeem the time, for the days of your past may have been evil.

It will, perhaps, enable you vigorously to set about this imperative duty, if you cast a glance at the various ways in which men fritter away the precious, the short, the irrevocable day of their life-pilgrimage. By far the great majority of men pass their days in an almost total vacuity of useful thought. Practically speaking, they think of nothing, that is to say of nothing that is profitable unto eternal life. Their brain, it is true, is filled with useless, trifling imaginings, and when these are swept aside by business, their place is often taken by thoughts that are not simply useless and trifling, but evil and destructive of the kingdom of God in their souls. These thoughts bud forth into evil deeds which stamp the moments of their life with the impress of a coin that is not current in heaven.

But if, setting aside and making no account of the time thus either unwittingly or criminally lost, we turn our attention to the multitudinous actions which fill up our days—actions which in themselves are neither good nor bad, but which need the soul of a good intention to make them vibrate with the pulse of spiritual life, a further vista is opened out to us of the fearful waste of precious time. We may safely say, that two-thirds of our day are consumed in the performance of

actions which fall under this category. Look at the time devoted to sleep, to the taking of our necessary sustenance, to honest recreation, to visits, to unnecessary reading. How few ever give a thought to the saving of these priceless moments! Yet they may be saved, if we will only take the trouble to supernaturalise them by this good intention. Our sleep may be made profitable to our souls, if we take it for God's sake. Our recreations and our very food may be turned into spiritual riches, which will purchase for us eternal life, if we impress them with the seal of this good intention. Thus may the time employed in the performance of our indifferent actions be turned to good account, and made profitable unto eternal life.

Again; how many are there who though devoting their lives to good works, to confessedly spiritual actions, unto which there is promised an eternal reward, nevertheless squander their time by doing these with a perverse intention. They give alms, but it is to attract attention and to gain the approval of men; they frequent the Sacraments, they are assiduous at the services of the Church, but it is to win a reputation for sanctity; they fast and practise other kinds of mortification, but it is to appear in the eyes of men, austere. These are good actions, but they will receive for them no other reward than that for which they have laboured. They will win the applause of men, but they will not gain the reward of God: "They have received their reward".

Others misspend their time by performing all these Christian duties, but to the neglect of their worldly occupations. They pray, when they should be working; they are devoted to charitable deeds, but they neglect the oversight of their families; they visit holy places when they should be attending to business for which they are paid, and thus commit an injustice to their employers. This is time lost.

Knowing, then, how precious is time, which has cost Jesus His life's blood, how short is the period of daylight during which you can work, how irrevocable it is, when once it has passed away, make a strong, a practical resolution to spend every moment of your day in working for the end for which

God has launched you upon the stream of time. Do not waste it in doing nothing. Do not lose the opportunities at your disposal for turning into gold everything that you animate with a good intention. Whatever you undertake, let it be done for God, and not for human praise. Do everything in its right time, and while performing your actions, see that necessary duties are not neglected. If in the past you have squandered the days of your brief life, be determined to repair that past, to redeem it by fervent work in the moments that may yet be at your disposal. Above all things bear in mind "that all time not spent in acquiring merit for eternity, is lost time".¹

"WALKING WORTHY OF OUR CALLING."

"I BESEECH you," says St. Paul to his converts, "that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called."² When he wrote these words he was an old man; the snows of many winters had whitened his hair; he was nearing the term of his labours; and as he sat in the chill of a Roman prison, his hands in manacles, awaiting his much longed for dissolution, he sent forth to those whom he had brought to the light of the true faith this last wish of his heart: "I, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of your vocation". As he spoke thus to the Christians of his time, so does he speak to you also, exhorting you to live up to the high standard of that calling unto which Our Lord has invited you. During these past few days you have been able in the solitude of Retreat to look into yourselves and to see whether you have been complying with the Apostle's exhortation. You have seen your many shortcomings, offences, negligences and sins. You have been startled by the foul deformity, the hideous nature of sin, and you have determined to be rid of it, to live henceforth for God, and in a manner worthy of your great dignity. Therefore, to-day I wish to put before you a few thoughts which will encourage you to keep that resolution, and to point out to you the means which will enable you to do it.

¹ St. Aug. Epist. 130, Ad. Probam.

² Eph. iv. 1.

“To walk worthy of your vocation,” is to persevere in the good resolutions made during the Retreat; to be on God’s side; to live for Him; to work for Him; not to be a follower of the devil; not to be the slave of sin; not again to stain yourself with its foul guilt. There are some who for a month or two remain faithful to these fervent promises; there are others who keep them for a year; there are others who persevere even longer still. But, unfortunately, they suffer the weariness engendered by this effort to overpower them. Then the brightness of the great truths which startled them gradually grows dim. Its brilliant light no longer casts its rays upon the monster sin. Consequently, sin loses its hideous look, and by degrees begins to wear quite a harmless appearance. Being seemingly harmless, the unwary venture once more within its reach. They go into danger, and they perish in it; for they fall, and become as they were before, no longer walking in a manner worthy of their high calling. Another Retreat is preached; and again there is conversion, to be followed by a perversion like to that which has already gone before. Thus life goes on. It is a series of repents and of relapses. It consists of attempts to combine the service of God with the service of the devil. To aim at this is to aim at the impossible; for no man can serve two masters so diametrically opposed to each other. It ends in being an incomplete, an unfinished thing, like a picture that is only half painted, or a watch that has not all its mechanism, and he who leads such a life is like that wretch of whom the ancient poets sing, a man whose punishment in hell consists in rolling a huge stone to the mountain top, whence it ever slips from his grasp and rushes back into the valley beneath. In the Sacred Scripture we are told that on what side soever the tree shall fall, there it shall lie.¹ But on what side does the tree usually fall? Is it not on that towards which it inclines? If, then, during life a man is ever bent towards sin, is it not likely that when the end comes he will fall, that is to say he will die in his sin?

If he die in his sin, all his previous striving will be in vain.

¹ Eccles. xi. 13.

Look into the pages of Holy Writ and there you will find how useless it is for any one to walk worthy of his vocation for a time only, unless he crowns it by persevering effort even to the end, and thus makes his life a perfect work.

Of what avail was it for Israel's great chief, the warrior Saul, to have been anointed King of God's people? What did it avail him to have lived for a time a pure and innocent life, a life so pure and innocent as to have been, in the eyes of God, "as the life of a child of one year old". He did not persevere in his innocence. He disobeyed the command of God; he went from bad to worse; he was rejected by the Lord; he died miserably, perishing by his own hand. Look at him as he lies on Mount Gelboe, stark in his armour, his kingly garments all dabbled in gore, his eyes open wide, glaring horribly, the foam of death upon his lips. On the morrow of that dreadful day the Philistines came to strip the dead, and finding Saul among the slain they took the royal bracelet from his arm, the diadem from his head, and then sacrilegiously struck that anointed head from his shoulders. Thus ended one who had not walked worthy of the vocation to which God had called him.

Was not Solomon the wisest of men? Was he not the favourite of God? No man either before or since has ever been so dowered with heavenly gifts and with earthly prosperity. Yet he did not persevere. He died after giving himself up to a life of the grossest sensuality, which so blinded and degraded his vast intelligence as to cause him to bow down to senseless idols. He also had not walked in a manner worthy of his high calling.

What did it avail Judas to have been an Apostle, to have been chosen by Christ Himself, to have lived with Him on terms of the closest intimacy? Our Lord most tenderly loved him. That love emboldened the Apostle to be so familiar with his Master as to imprint upon His adorable face the kiss of friendship. Nay, Our Lord called him "*friend*". But he walked not worthy of his vocation. What was the result? Look to his end, and you will see. As the night of that terrible day closed, in upon which Christ was condemned to death

and was so barbarously treated, the guilty traitor slunk out of the city and buried himself in the gloom of one of the many olive-yards that lie round Jerusalem. Despair like a ravenous vulture was gnawing at his heart. All the devils of hell seemed to have gathered around him to hound him on to his own destruction. “What hast thou done?” they shrieked in his ear. “Thou hast betrayed thy Master, the Son of God! For thee there is no hope, there can be no salvation.” Tortured by his thoughts, beyond the power of human endurance, he lifts his eyes at last to a gaunt, wind-swept tree which threw its skeleton arms out above his head. Fastening to one of its branches a halter which he may have procured from a stable close at hand, he put it about his neck and hanged himself, thus most lamentably ending his wretched existence. He had been an Apostle! He now hangs there a suicide, a reprobate!

These examples of men who having once known the way of justice did not persevere in it—that is to say, did not walk worthy of their vocation—ought to fill you with a well-grounded fear that if you imitate them in their infidelity you will end your days as they did, at enmity with God. Therefore, I say to you, to you who have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb: “See that you walk circumspectly, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time” that you have hitherto lost in sin and in repentance that has again lapsed into sin. “Walk worthy of your vocation.” You are now at peace, for you have returned to God. But you will not long be left unmolested. You have come to the service of God; but what is the warning of the Wise Man to each of those who have taken this first step and entered upon the straight road to heaven? It is this: “Stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation”.¹ His words of caution are not uncalled for; for what does the devil do when a penitent sinner by heartfelt sorrow and by humble confession has ejected him from the soul? Listen to the words of Christ and they will inform you: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places

¹ Eccl. ii. 1.

without water, seeking rest : and not finding, he saith : I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself." They lay siege to that house and, unless they are persistently repulsed, "they enter in and dwell there. And the last state of that man becometh worse than the first."¹ Therefore, by perseverance in good, that is to say, by "walking worthy of your vocation," endeavour to ward off from yourself so dire a calamity.

You will, therefore, now naturally enough ask me : "What are the means that I must take, in order to persevere in the good way on which I have entered, and by so doing, to 'walk worthy of my vocation' ? "

I answer : There are many means with which you are already familiar. You must be on the watch, like a sentry at his post, with the enemy's lines in view. He slumbers not ; he sleeps not ; he is always on the alert. You must pray to God for help, otherwise your vigilance will be of no avail. When the hour of trial comes, you must resist, you must fight like a brave soldier. All these are the common remedies prescribed by your directors. There is, however, one other, which like the rest, is always given as an infallible means for securing victory, and on this I wish specially to insist, because it is as the key-stone to an arch. The other means will be profitless without it. You must most studiously avoid the *occasions of sin*. An occasion of sin is that which gives rise to the temptation to sin, and fans into a flame the fire of passion smouldering within you. If while hurrying along the public way you either strike your foot against a stone, or slip upon something lying in your path and fall to the earth, you look to see what that is which has caused this accident. This you most carefully guard against in future. Now, you know from past experience what those things are which have led you into sin, and these you call the occasions of sin, henceforth to be by you most studiously avoided.

¹ St. Luke xi. 24, 26.

Sometimes it is a book which has filled your imagination with evil images ; or a picture which has suggested obscene ideas ; or a word which lets loose a whole flood of passion upon your soul ; or a companion whose person is dangerous. Each of these has over you a fascination similar to that which the glitter of a serpent's eye has upon an animal over which it seems to cast an irresistible spell. From each of these you must keep aloof. You must not dally with any of them. You must not hesitate, nor go within reach of them. If you do, you will at last fall into sin. Observe what befell Samson when he began to play, as it were, on the verge of that secret which he should have kept locked up within his own breast. His heathen wife sought to worm it out of him, and, through love of her, he went as near as possible to the secret without actually divulging it. He went into the occasion of so doing, and like all who court that danger he found in it his destruction. "What," said she to him, "is that wherewith if thou wert bound thou couldst not break loose? . . . If I shall be bound with seven cords, . . . I shall be weak like other men. . . . If I shall be bound with new ropes, . . . I shall be weak and like other men." The third time he drew nearer still to his secret: "If thou plattest *the seven locks of my head* with a lace, and tying them round about a nail fastenest it in the ground, I shall be weak". Thus, at last, having first gone fatally near the secret, he divulged it: "If my head be shaven, my strength shall depart from me, and I shall become weak, and shall be like other men".¹ On learning this, she communicated it to his enemies, who easily overcame him, plucked out his eyes, cast him into prison, and made a mockery of him.

Thus is it always with those who foolishly thrust themselves into the occasion of sin. They love the danger, and they perish in it. They say: "I will go into that company from which I have now so long kept away ; but I will not sin, for I have reformed my life. So also have they who led me into evil ways. There is, therefore, now no danger." Yes, there

¹ Judges xvi. 6-17.

is danger, and grave danger. For you are not reformed if you again venture, without solid reasons, within the reach of that which has been your ruin. Your passion is not dead. It only sleeps. As the fox pretends death, and thus stirs up the curiosity of the foolish geese which he wishes to destroy, so does the devil pretend to have withdrawn from your heart, and from the hearts of those who led you into his snares. Again, they say: "I am now strong in virtue; therefore, I can resist the temptations of the devil". So said David. But when he went into the occasion of sin, he fell. Therefore, do not bring forward any more excuses. Especially do not say, as some do: "I will go into the occasion, but God will help me, and prevent me from committing sin". I tell you that God will not help you. He says that He will not: "He that loveth the danger shall perish in it". As long as you keep out of the occasion, you are safe; for then in your regard the devil is as a savage dog that is securely chained. If you go within reach of his teeth, you have only yourself to blame if he catches you, and tears you with his merciless fangs.

To this counsel of keeping far from the occasion of sin, I will add only these others: Go frequently to the tribunal of penance. There you will find a skilful physician who will give you sage advice, and will point out to you certain marks by which he knows that all is not well with you, and that you must be doubly on your guard. In the next place, approach frequently to the Holy Table. Your little store of spiritual strength needs frequent renewal, and in Holy Communion you eat that bread which gives to the Christian soul the strength and the courage of a lion. Then your spiritual foes will flee from you in abject terror. Lastly, try to become a man of prayer. Other remedies are not always at hand, not always in your power. Prayer is always at your command. It is a weapon always at your side. Use it frequently; use it well; use it especially at the moment when your enemies are stealthily drawing nigh to you, and making ready to spring upon you. They cannot withstand it, for it has in it the might of the Omnipotent.¹

¹ Here end the Lectures suitable for times of Retreat.

THE INVITATION TO THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

FROM the earliest times, when the great human family was as yet but in germ, God called mankind to worship and obey Him, that by so doing they might win for themselves the possession of everlasting life. Their response to His call, was, as a general rule, a refusal, and the history of that refusal, with the consequences which flowed from it, constitutes the matter of the Parable spoken by Our Lord. That Parable has, therefore, two sides to it, one which looks to what has been, the other to what shall be, if the call of God be unheeded, or if, though heeded, the conditions implied in it be not faithfully carried into effect. A careful consideration of both, cannot but fill our hearts with a resolution generously to accept His invitation, and loyally to fulfil its conditions.

To-day, therefore, we will direct our thoughts to the contemplation of both sides of the Parable.

With respect to that side of it which shows us what has been, it is, in brief, a history of God's dealings with men, pointing out to us all that He has done to save them. He is the King Who made the marriage feast for His Son. That marriage feast, or assembly of guests, represented the society which His Son was to establish, a society with which He was so closely to unite Himself as to constitute with it one living body, of which He should be the head. The invited guests were, first of all, the Jewish people whom God selected by free choice to be the instruments of salvation to the rest of the world. The messengers sent out to call them to the banquet, were the Prophets or Seers, who from time to time, and from age to age, sprang up in the midst of the nation, and by their teachings and their warnings, pointed out the great Redeemer Who was to deliver men from their sins and introduce them into the kingdom of His Father.

To these servants of God, the great bulk of the nation paid but little heed. They shut their eyes to the light poured upon them, and turned away their ears from the glad tidings of redemption, which ought to have made their hearts beat with ecstatic joy. They gave no excuse. They simply would

not come. Then the King's own Son was sent to accomplish the will of His Father. But with what result the sad history of the Gospel narrative has written in letters of blood. When He had accomplished His mission, He sent other messengers with even more peremptory orders to call His wayward children to the heavenly banquet prepared for them. Boldly leaving the upper chamber, where they had been hiding through fear of those whom they wished to benefit and to save, the Apostles went forth into the streets of Jerusalem and fearlessly told their astonished hearers, that He Whom they had mercilessly done to death upon the disgraceful gibbet of the Cross, was in very truth the Messias predicted through the long centuries, and ardently sighed for by Prophets and by holy men. With a divine ardour enkindled by their living faith, and a devouring love begotten of their zeal, they once again invited them to the marriage feast of their Lord. Their ardour was met by chains and by the close custody of the prison-house ; their zeal was rewarded by galling stripes, and by inveterate hate. To all their urgent pleadings, a deaf ear was turned. To all their arguments and proofs, pouring into men's intelligence a flood of light clear as the noonday, their eyes were obstinately closed. They would not accept the message, they would not come to the marriage feast. When Stephen spoke to them and stood before them pleading like an Angel, they crushed him to death beneath a hail of cruel stones ; and though the Apostle James by his sanctity and blameless life compelled their unwilling admiration, they beat him to death with clubs.

What more could God do to win them from their stubborn opposition both to Himself and to His Christ ? He could do nothing more than His wisdom had decreed to do ; the measure of His patience was exhausted ; the cup of their iniquities was filled up ; the day of vengeance was at hand. In the words of the Parable, He sent His armies to lay waste their city, and to slay the murderers of His Prophets. Forty years after the death of His beloved Son, the Romans, under Titus, laid siege to Jerusalem, and compassed it round on every side. Within the walls, a vast

multitude had gathered to celebrate the great Jewish festival. The provisions were soon exhausted, and the wretched people were reduced to such frightful extremities, that the pitiful women slew and ate their own offspring. Pestilence trod close upon the heels of famine. As if these two scourges were not enough to chastise the iniquities of that stiff-necked race, civil dissension broke out among them, and they slew one another with the edge of the sword. At last the Romans forced an entrance and completed what the sword, and the pestilence, and the famine had left undone. The great Temple, the nation's pride, was devoured by the flames; the public buildings, the houses of the poor, and the palaces of the wealthy, were swallowed by the deluge of fire; and at last, only a heap of blackened, smouldering ruins marked the place where once the flourishing city had stood. The miserable remnant of its inhabitants were dragged in chains at the conqueror's chariot-wheels, and, for the amusement of a degraded and bloodthirsty populace, were compelled to slay one another in the great Roman amphitheatre. Those who survived after these cruel butcheries, became outcasts and wanderers upon the face of the earth, without country, without altar, without that God Whom they had, with the fanatical stubbornness of their race, rejected and scorned.

This is the historical side of the Parable. It puts before us that which has been—the rejection of God's call, and the fearful consequences of that rejection.

Let us now turn to its prophetic side, for that most intimately concerns ourselves.

When rejected by the Jews, the Apostles turned to the Gentiles, to our forefathers, who were as the blind and the lame, lying in the highways and lurking beneath the hedges, grovelling in all the misery and filth of a corrupt and pagan civilisation. They invited them to the banquet of the Lamb, and the Gentiles crowded in, shaming both by their faith and by their good works the unworthy children of Abraham.

Here the Parable is meant for all men. They are called to enter that Church or assembly of Christ's faithful, and to live in it as men should live, who are under the full blaze of God's

light and truth. If they will not obey that call, and correspond with the graces which accompany it, then they may expect a repetition of history. That which has been, will once again of a certainty come to pass. He will send His ministers to destroy them, if they do not heed His invitation ; He will cast them into the exterior darkness of hell, if they dare to accept it without caring to fulfil the conditions which are annexed to it.

In these days, then, the call to the marriage feast is of a twofold character. It is, first, a call to enter the Church of Christ, and then to lead, in that Church, a holy life. But amid the thousand and one claimants who each and all pretend to be the Church of Christ, which, you will ask, must men choose ? to which must they yield obedience and pay their dutiful service ? For those who are in earnest, and who are willing to make sacrifices, this choice is not so difficult a matter as, at first sight, it seems to be. Look about you, and use your reason. Among the multitudinous Churches which claim to be Christian, there is only one that in numbers, in organisation, and in the unbroken line of its supreme rulers, stands before the world as the one, Catholic, apostolic Church. She claims to be that one Church founded by Christ, and denies that prerogative to all others. She claims for herself only, the possession and the guardianship of the deposit of faith, and admits no other as a sharer in that priceless treasure, or in that exalted office. She claims for herself the gift of infallibility in teaching and in explaining the truth, a privilege promised her by her Divine Head, and rejected by all the sects. She is everywhere and is everywhere the same, whereas the sects, though everywhere, are everywhere different, and at war with one another, agreeing only on one point, that is to say, in their hostility to her. "She is one in type with the apostolic Church, one in her system of principles, one in her unitive power towards externals, one in her logical consecutiveness, one in the witness of her early phases to her later, one in the protection which her later extends to her earlier, and one in her union of vigour with continuance, that is, her tenacity."¹

¹ Card. Newman, *Development of Christ : Doctrine*, chap. v.

Hence, she is as a city built upon a hill, a city which cannot be hid, and as a light upon a lofty tower to be seen by every eye that is not wilfully shut against it. To that Church all are invited by Prophet, by Apostle, by Christ Himself Who is the One Shepherd of the One Fold. To each, then, we say : Do not reject this call. Do not let family ties, nor worldly wisdom, nor temporal prosperity, nor the scorn of men keep you away. It is God that calls ; you must shut your eyes to every other consideration, your ears to every other voice, and obey. If you do not, the history of Jerusalem will be also your history. Your enemies will compass you on every side. You will be straitened by a hunger of the heart, and of the intelligence. Your vital strength will be eaten away by a moral pestilence. Your ungovernable passions will destroy you. The temple of God in you, will be beaten flat to the ground, and you will live for all eternity under the tyrannical sway of the devil.

Those who are already members of Christ's glorious Church are not, by that fact alone, sure of the salvation which may be secured within her bosom. The Parable has for them also a heart-stirring lesson ; for the second characteristic of that call is, that he who obeys it must comply with the conditions annexed to it. These, indeed, are manifold in their nature, but though numerous, they may all be reduced to one, and that is, that the privileged guest at the King's marriage feast should be clothed with a wedding garment, or in other words, should lead a holy life. This is an easy thing to say, but a difficult matter to do. It means to observe the whole law of God, and not merely a part of it. Consequently, it entails the crucifixion of the flesh with all its disorderly concupiscences. For the flesh of the unregenerate man is wholly opposed to the government or law of God. Man wills to be free, to have no master. He would have his mind completely untrammelled, and at liberty to indulge in all its wayward fancies ; his heart, to follow its lusts ; his eyes, to gaze unrestrained upon whatsoever they please ; his hands, to do what he lists ; his feet, to go whithersoever he may desire. But this cannot be ; for it means nothing more nor less than

to dispossess God of His throne, and make the creature its own centre, its own end. It means stripping the soul of every vestige of that supernatural raiment which adorns, and makes it fit to be presented before the eyes of the great King.

Therefore, that liberty, or rather that licence in which the soul would naturally wish to disport itself, must be curtailed. The vices and the concupiscences must be sternly repressed. Then, by the munificence and the grace of God, there will descend upon the soul that garment of surpassing beauty, the possession of which will entitle it to sit at the banquet of everlasting life.

But woe unto that man who is so bold, so daring, as to thrust himself into the banqueting hall, without that brilliant vesture. The great Master will halt suddenly in His progress among the guests, and will sternly ask him, how he has dared to sully that feast with his polluted presence. He will be able to make no reply, because he will feel that he is without excuse. Then turning to His ministers, the Master will say to them : “ Bind fast his hands and his feet, and cast him out into the exterior darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth ”. Who will not shudder at this terrible sentence ? Who will not be afraid lest it should fall upon himself ? O God ! give us the grace to be among the number of those elect few who accept Thy invitation, and comply with the conditions which are always annexed to Thy favours !

THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

IN the Book of Revelations, St. John tells us that he saw before the throne of God and in sight of the Lamb, a great multitude which no man could number, clothed in white robes, and with palms in their hands ; a multitude composed of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues ; crowned with glory ; resplendent with the light which shone from the face of God ; and exulting with the joy with which that entrancing presence flooded their souls. These are the vast army of the Saints whose feast we celebrate to-day. They are our brothers who have fought the good fight, who have accomplished their

course, and who are, therefore, for ever at rest in the kingdom of Our Father. Look up to them, and let the prize which they have won rouse all the ardour of your heart to emulate their example ; to tread the path which they have trod ; and to earn for yourself the reward which they have merited. What they are, you shall one day be. But, to be what they are, you must now be what they were—Saints in the midst of a corrupt and perverse generation. Does this seem to you an impossibility ? If it does, it is because you have not the true idea of what a Saint is.

Let me, therefore, try to put it before you, and you will see that, after all, to be a Saint is not so difficult as you think.

Most boys, and for the matter of that, most men, have a very exaggerated idea of all that is necessary to make a Saint. According to them, a Saint is one who does extraordinary works of piety and virtue. He is to be found only in the desert, or in the seclusion of some monastic retreat ; a pale, emaciated, weird-looking being, of a nature too ethereal, too exalted, to deal with the ordinary occurrences of every-day life. His days and nights are spent in prayer ; for him, there are no such things as duties, works, business-dealings with his fellow-men. All his time is given up to spiritual exercises, to fasting, to church-services, to the maceration of his flesh by means of hair-shirts, and other strange instruments of torture. He heals the sick ; he opens the eyes of the blind ; he drives away disease ; nay, he raises to life even the dead. Now, all these are the *extraordinary* works of sanctity. Well might you despair of heaven, if you could not be a Saint without any of them. Yet you most certainly can ; for sanctity does not consist in them.

Some of the brightest and greatest Saints in the courts of heaven, never during the course of their earthly pilgrimage, worked a single miracle. St. Joseph, who was so holy as to be intrusted with the keeping of God's only begotten Son, is not recorded to have done anything miraculous. St. John the Baptist, so far as we are able to learn, never cleansed a leper, nor healed a sick man, nor opened the eyes of the blind, nor raised any one from the dead. Yet Our Lord declared

that among those born of women there was none greater than he. Our immaculate Mother performed no miracles. Yet, who among mere mortals, or among the heavenly host is holier than she? Therefore, it is quite possible for you to be a Saint, without the performance of any of these wondrous deeds which we are accustomed to assign to sanctity.

What, then, is requisite to make you a Saint? All that you have to do, is to keep the commandments of God, and faithfully to fulfil the duties of your everyday life. Believe with all your heart and soul everything that God has revealed, and His Church has taught; put all your hopes in Him; carefully accomplish your religious duties; make good, humble confessions, and devout communions, and you will be a Saint. Be kind and gentle to your companions; do not speak ill of them; do not resent the little injuries which they may do to you; help them in their difficulties and their sorrows; let them never see in your conduct anything that would turn them from the ways of God, and you will be a Saint.

Keep the rules of your College; be obedient and docile to your Superiors; restrain your tongue from speaking when you are bound to be silent; observe the limits marked out for you; be modest when no eye is looking at you but the eye of God; drive away evil thoughts and desires from your mind and your heart; preserve that heart, that body which is the temple of the living God, free from all defilement, and you will be a Saint.

When you are in the Study, diligently apply to your hard and, it may be to you, uninteresting tasks; apply to them because it is God's will that you should labour at them, and you will be a Saint. Nothing more is needed to make you one. Do not suppose that you must forego all amusement and banish all merriment from your heart. The Saints were always cheerful and joyous. You must not imagine that your face is to be ever preternaturally solemn; that no peal of innocent laughter is to break from your lips; that no boisterous games are to fill up the hours of your recreation. These are duties just as much as study and prayer are. God is

pleased when you enjoy these moments, especially when you do so with a pure intention of pleasing Him. He does not wish you to be in the chapel, when you ought to be in the Study ; nor to be saying prayers, when you ought to be at your work. There is a time for everything. When the time for prayer comes, pray earnestly and as well as you can. When you have to study, study earnestly and for His sake. When you have to play, give yourself up to it with your whole heart. By doing this you will be a Saint.

You see, then, that sanctity consists in keeping the law of God, and in accomplishing the duties of your state, for God's sake. Hence, any one may be a Saint in any walk of life unto which God has called him. There are Saints labouring at the docks and in the mines ; there are Saints upon the Exchange and in the merchant's office ; there are Saints upon the parade ground, and on the decks of our war-ships ; there are Saints in the artist's studio and at the Bar. In every position in which men are walking before God with a clean heart and doing their duty, there are Saints. Therefore, in your position as a boy at School, you may become a Saint, and merit one day to be among the glorious ranks of the blessed in the kingdom of Our Father. Your commonest, most ordinary, most indifferent acts, may be changed into acts of virtue, deserving a supernatural, an eternal reward. Sanctify them by prayer, perform them with a pure intention because they are willed by God, and that pure intention, like the wand of the magician, will change all that you touch into the purest gold. You need not quit your desk nor your playground ; you need not spend your recreation time in the chapel ; you need not forego any of your amusements to do this. God is not far from you. He is with you. You have not to go into the desert to find Him ; He is by your side. His commands are not difficult ; His yoke is not heavy, not by any means so heavy and so galling as the yoke of sin. His service is not burdensome, not so burdensome as the slavery of sin. Therefore, only efficaciously will to be a Saint, and the task is accomplished.

To aid you in coming to a determination which will be

fruitful in so many lasting blessings to yourself, cast your eyes for a moment upon all that God promises to you—a happy, joyous life here below, the peace of a good conscience, the absence of terror at death, the bliss of a never-ending life in heaven, in the company of the Angels and the Saints. Compare all this with the little that He exacts from you. A little self-restraint, a little inconvenience for a short time, till good habits are acquired ; the observance of His commandments—an observance which is in itself a great reward ; the accomplishment of your duties for His sake. Oh, what is this, when weighed with the reward of heaven !

Do not, then, hesitate any longer. Be determined to be a Saint. If you feel wearied with studies, offer that weariness to God. If you are tempted, offer these troubles to Him. If your temper is tried, offer that ordeal to Him. You will taste how sweet is the Lord, even amid the sorrows of this world, and you will have an assured hope, when life's brief day shall be over, of being admitted to that kingdom in which sorrow and trial and weeping will have no place.

THE PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH.

MANY of the most precious things that the hands of God have made, are hidden from the eyes of man, and are brought within reach of his admiring gaze, only by means of painful toil and unwearying search. Thus, the gem of priceless worth lies entombed in the centre of the hardest rocks ; the glittering metals which the avaricious covet with so much greed, have to be dug out of the very bowels of the earth ; the purest pearls must be sought for in the ocean-depths, under the covering waters of the sea. So is it, also, with those other, and infinitely more precious creations of God—His ever blessed Saints, who are the gold, the pearls, and the gems of the spiritual world. They are, as a general rule, hidden with Christ in God. Their great virtues and their heroic actions escape the notice of the worldly minded, who usually have eyes and affections only for those things which they can touch with their hands.

If this is true of the other great servants of Our Lord, it is, in a very special way, true of the meek and lowly St. Joseph, the feast of whose patronage we celebrate to-day. His priceless worth escapes our notice, and it is brought before the eyes of our minds only when, by the labour of reflection, we search for it. Then it begins to unfold itself to us, and we come to understand why he has had conferred upon him the glorious title "Patron of the Universal Church".

Let us, then, apply our minds for a few moments to this profitable labour, which will show us St. Joseph's worth, by unveiling before our eyes the magnitude of his sanctity.

When we either hear from the lips of preachers, or read in books, eulogiums upon the greatness of his holiness, we feel, perhaps, somewhat perplexed, and inclined to call for reasons which will justify the apparently exaggerated epithets applied to it. If it be as great as these panegyrists represent it to be, we shall surely find traces of it in the actions which he performed, in the influence which he exercised over his contemporaries, in the words which have guided and led their minds to bend to his will. For, it is on account of great deeds, of widespread influence, and of transcendent wisdom that men are crowned with the title "great". Can we discover any of these distinguishing marks in St. Joseph? If we examine his career from its beginning to its end, we can find in it nothing that men would call great. He never did anything which would merit from them that title. No one was, by him, called back from the grave. He gave to no man the priceless boon of sight. The leper was not cleansed by him, nor did the lame receive from him the free use of their limbs. Over the men of his time, so far as we can see, he had not the slightest influence. Nay, so obscure, so unimportant does he appear to have been, that in the whole range of the New Testament story, there is not recorded a single word that he ever uttered. From whatever point of view our human intelligence may look at him, we see nothing but a simple, silent, peaceful old man, whose life was so hidden in God that even the fact of his death, and the place of his burial, are deemed to have been so unimportant that no record of them has been handed down to us.

But, though mean and insignificant in the eyes of men, he must have been of priceless worth in the esteem of God. To the eye of Him Who seeth all things, he was as a diamond of priceless value, hidden in the hard, rough, unlovely rock ; as precious gold concealed in the bowels of the earth ; as a pearl hidden in some ocean cave ; for, if he were not, never would God have held him in such high esteem. A little reflection will, in some slight measure, reveal to us the magnitude of that esteem. Try, then, to conceive an idea of the immense love which the Creator had for the various works which came from His hands. One after another, as He fashioned them, He looked upon them, and pronounced them to be "good," the huge mass of the earth, the waters flowing through and fertilising it, the fishes that swim its ocean paths, the birds which people the air, the trees, the plants, the flowers which beautify the earth's surface, the moon and the stars, which preside over the night, the great orb which rules over the day. As lord of this new created world, He made to His own image man, and his helpmate, woman. Them He did not at once pronounce to be "good," for they had free will, which had yet to be tested. That trial came upon them, and they proved unfaithful to the God Who created them. Though He punished them for their infidelity, He did not utterly cast them off, but after pronouncing their doom, He promised them a deliverer who in due time should come and crush the serpent's head. He was to be bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, and, at the same time, the Eternal God—man to suffer and to die for their redemption, God to give to that suffering and to that death, an infinite worth. Does not this open out before our eyes a view of the infinite love of God for man, the creature of His hands ?

But if His love for man was so boundless, judge what must be the length and the height, the depth and the breadth of His love for the wondrous creature who was preordained to be the Mother of His only begotten Son ! She was the one privileged being on whom the stain of the primal transgression did not fall. In view of her exalted dignity as the creature chosen out to be the Mother of the world's Redeemer, and

through the merits of that Redeemer's blood, she was exempted from every taint of sin. The Father had chosen her as His daughter, the Word as His Mother, the Holy Ghost as His spouse. She was the delight of the Trinity, the jewel of the human race. In the whole world there was nothing dearer to God, nothing more precious in His sight. Yet, she was but a frail creature, and during her life she needed an earthly protector, an arm of flesh on which, in the sight of man, she was to lean. God looked through the countless millions of men that swarmed upon the earth for one who should worthily fill that office. On whom did His choice fall? Not upon the great men of the time; not upon the powerful who swayed the empire of the world; not upon the learned who guided its councils—but upon the humble carpenter, St. Joseph. By this measure, gauge, if you can, the esteem which God had for His lowly servant; judge of his worth; calculate the magnitude of His sanctity!

In the fulness of time that immaculate Virgin, by the mysterious operation of the Spirit of God, conceived and brought forth a Child. Who was that Child? He was, and He now is, the Son of the Most High God! He is the Creator of this world, for by Him all things were made. He is the Redeemer promised of old time in the garden of Eden, after the lamentable fall of man. To whom did God commit the care of that newly born Infant, and of His highly favoured Mother? He intrusted the Child and His Mother to the care of St. Joseph. Joseph was accustomed to carry Jesus in his arms. He frequently had Him nestling close to his heart. For years, Jesus was daily and hourly under his eye. He taught that man-God, Whose mighty hands fashioned the universe, to labour for His daily bread. That wondrous Child, God as He was, obeyed, reverenced, and loved St. Joseph! How great must have been God's esteem for him, how priceless must have been his worth, how exalted his sanctity, since the Lord of heaven and earth made him the guardian of the Incarnate Word, and of the immaculate Virgin whom He had so privileged, and so richly dowered with the plenitude of divine grace, in order that she might, in some

degree, be worthy to be the spotless Mother of that Incarnate God !

Again ; if we call to mind the part which he had to play in the plan of redemption, it will help us still further to form a right idea of God's esteem for him, of his worth, and of his exalted sanctity. The mission of the other great Saints was to make known Jesus Christ ; the mission of St. Joseph was to hide from the eyes of men the mysteries connected with the Incarnation. How did he do this ? By being regarded by those among whom he lived as the husband of Mary, he most carefully concealed the fact of her spotless virginity. He also hid from their irreverent eyes the paternity of the Holy Ghost, for in the common belief, Jesus was the son of Joseph the carpenter. He veiled from their gaze the fact of Our Lord's Divinity, by ever acting towards Him as if he were really His father.¹

Furthermore, though the facts of his life recorded by the Evangelists are few and apparently unimportant, they are yet sufficient to give us an idea of his sanctity, his worth, and of the esteem which God has for him. For as upon a stormy night the lightning flash, though lasting but an instant, reveals to the traveller vast tracts of country, with rock, and ravine, and yawning abysses which the darkness covers, so do these passing notices of St. Joseph open to our view hitherto unthought of regions of holiness, about which the Gospels are utterly silent. Look, for example, at the sublime simplicity of his character ! The Scripture does not speak of it, but by the mere absence of any word concerning it, the Gospel story says more to us than could be conveyed in many an eloquent page. It tells us that the Eternal God, and His Mother were committed to Joseph's care ; that they lived under his roof ; that they were subject to him ! Yet, though in a communion so close as this, with beings so exalted, never do we find St. Joseph looking for any supernatural visitants to guide him in his dealings with them. When the Father wished to give him an order, no bright Angel stood before him, as before the

¹ Nicolas, *La Vierge Marie*, tome 3, chap. xv.

Prophets of old, with the words: "Thus saith the Lord". It was always in a dream that the message came to him, and with that he was content. How wonderful is his obedience, that virtue which in itself embraces all others, and gives to God the noblest sacrifice that man can offer to his Maker. In a vision of the night, after his mind had been racked by torturing doubts, he is told to take Mary for his wife. Without a word of explanation, he obeys. In the same way he is told to flee into Egypt. Without a word of remonstrance, he obeys. He is told to return. He complies immediately. Everywhere and in all things, there is a complete and unhesitating compliance with the will of God. These instances, as we said, are but flashes for an instant lighting up the darkness. But they serve their purpose. They point out to us a great Saint, one of God's hidden jewels of great price, a jewel which we shall see shining with all its brilliancy only when time has passed away, and we gaze upon it under the rays of glory which go forth from the face of God.

From this silent, gentle, lowly man, learn this lesson: that to be very dear to God, and very holy, it is not necessary that you should do any very great action. You have but to commit yourself to God's keeping, to suffer Him to guide you, to be obedient to your Superiors, to keep your heart pure, to be ever closely united to Jesus and Mary. Though the world at large, and those who are in hourly communication with you may know nothing of your internal worth, yet before God you also will be a jewel of great price, and when your course in life shall be over, you will be taken to the treasury of your Father, there to shine with a new and everlasting brilliancy, under the light that beams from the face of your God.

TYPES OR FIGURES OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

THERE is a phrase, commonly enough upon the lips of men, to the effect that "coming events usually cast their shadows before them". By a wise dispensation of Providence, this was true of Our divine Lord. Ages before His Incarnation, there were sent into the world men who in their persons and by their acts foreshadowed the advent of the great Redeemer.

It will not, therefore, be to us a matter of surprise that the greatest gift that Our loving Saviour was to leave to His Church, should likewise have been foreshadowed by types or figures which prepared the minds of men for its reception. As, then, we are now about to treat of that superexcellent gift bequeathed to us by Jesus in the Sacrament of His love, we will first put before your minds the various types or figures which, previously to its actual institution, Almighty God set before the eyes of men, in order to prepare them for the contemplation of that gift which is the most striking proof of His infinite love for us.

The first dim outline of the Holy Sacrament may be traced in those sacrifices which the immediate descendants of our first parents began to offer to God, in the days when the world was still young, sacrifices which they taught their children to offer in order to worship God, and to appease His wrath, kindled against them by their sins. They took from their flocks the richest, the fattest, the most spotless they could find, and having slain them and poured forth their blood as a libation, burnt them upon their rude altars before the Lord. These sacrifices were but figures of the great sacrifice yet to come, a sacrifice which Christ was to offer upon the altar of the Cross, and to continue to offer till the end of time, by the daily, the never-ceasing oblation of the Holy Eucharist, a sacrifice identical with that of the Cross, and differing from it only in the manner in which it is offered.

We find a still clearer, more sharply defined figure of it in that sacrifice which was offered by Melchisedech, the King of Salem, who met the victorious Abram returning from the rout and slaughter of the five kings. Being a priest of the Most High God, he brought forth bread and wine, and offering them up, blessed the triumphant warrior, and from him received tithes of all the spoils. Here we have brought before us an oblation in which the matter of the Eucharist is prefigured ; so that David, in prophecy, could say of the future Redeemer Who was to institute the great sacrifice of the new dispensation : "Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech".

But it is of the Holy Eucharist as a sacrament that we have the most striking types or figures. In the centre of the Paradise of pleasure, in which God placed the first man, there grew the tree of life. The fruit of it was endowed with certain qualities which enabled our first parents, as long as they remained in the state of innocence, to keep themselves in undiminished strength, in robust health, and in unfading beauty. But the moment that by their disobedience they lost the friendship of God and tarnished the spotless purity of their souls, they were forbidden to touch it, or rather they were ignominiously driven from the garden of delights, lest they should partake of it and live for ever, a privilege which they had forfeited by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil.

Before delivering the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, and before striking its ruler and his people with the last and most terrible of the plagues with which He had afflicted them, God gave to His own chosen ones another figure of the great Sacrament which, in the fulness of time, was to be the central object of the worship of His Church, the well-spring of its life, and its shield against all the enemies that should assail it. He called to Him His servant Moses, and bade him order each family to take a yearling lamb, without spot or blemish of any kind ; to kill it ; to eat it as they stood round the table girded as for a journey ; to dip a branch of hyssop in its blood, and therewith to sprinkle the door-posts of their dwellings. On that night, He sent His Angel through the land of Egypt, and slew the first-born of every family, from the first-born of Pharaoh in his palace, to the first-born of the bond-woman labouring at the mill. There was wailing, there was mourning that night throughout all the land of Egypt. But the arrows of death struck none of those who had eaten of that mystic lamb, and had sprinkled their houses with its saving blood.

After this appalling visitation, their oppressor was but too eager to let the Israelites go, and Moses, under the guidance of God, led them through the desert towards the pleasant land which had been promised them as their inheritance.

But where could he procure food for so vast a host? Nothing is impossible with God. Therefore, having in view the countless host that should, in the course of ages, form the soldiers of His Church, march through the desert of life to the land of eternal rest, and consequently need a spiritual sustenance capable of fortifying them against all the fatigues and the conflicts incident to that weary way, He sent down from heaven a wondrous kind of bread, to prefigure that sacred aliment with which He was to feed His elect. During the night, that mystic food fell silently, and when in the morning the people arose, lo! the earth all around was covered with it, as with a glittering hoar-frost.

Later on by many, many years, when another great prophet and leader was striving with all the earnestness of his soul to win back the people of God from the idolatry into which they had fallen, and when, in his zeal for the truth, he had caused God to work by his feeble hands a miracle so astounding that these faithless ones no longer hesitated between the Lord and Baal, but in their enthusiasm slew the false prophets of that detestable idol, the implacable wrath of Jezabel was enkindled against him, and he fled away to Bersabee of Juda. Thence he travelled on for the space of one day's journey into the desert, till wearied and footsore, dejected in mind and exhausted in body, he flung himself down under the shadow of a tree, and asked that he might die: "It is enough for me, Lord, take away my soul; for I am no better than my fathers". Sleep closed his eyes, and his over-spent body and jaded spirit had a little rest. After a time, an Angel of the Lord aroused him from his slumber, saying to him: "Arise and eat. He looked, and, behold, there were at his head a hearth-cake and a vessel of water: and he ate and drank, and he fell asleep again. And the Angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him and said to him: Arise, eat: for thou hast yet a great way to go. And he arose, and ate, and drank, and walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto the mount of God, Horeb."¹

¹ 3 Kings xix. 4-8.

What an admirable figure of the Eucharist is this bread on which Elias fed ! Like him, the Christian is fleeing from the face of his enemies, and making for the mount of God. The way is long and rough. The heat is oppressive. The spirit sinks. The sustaining force gives out. He flings himself down dejected, saying : "It is enough". But he has yet a great way to go. What will restore his exhausted powers ? What will rouse up his well-nigh extinguished courage ? There is ever close at hand that mysterious, Eucharistic bread, that wine which fills the soul with a heavenly ardour. He rises from his dejection ; he eats ; he drinks, and in the might which that food imparts, he strides along like a giant, rejoicing to run his way.

These are but a few of the types or figures by which God cast into the world, and before the eyes of men, a shadow of that great gift which He bestowed upon man, on the night before Our Lord suffered. Your own reading of the Sacred Volume will unfold to you many more. The instruction which you have already received will show you, with what veneration the Church regards that wondrous gift. The names by which she calls it are an indication of her undying love and profound veneration for it, and of her earnest, maternal desire to keep ever before our minds a vivid idea of what it is. At one time she calls it the *Eucharist*, to signify that it is the most excellent grace and thanksgiving, for in it we receive the author of grace, and by it we offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, the most pleasing that it is possible to present. At another, she calls it *Communion*, to remind us that in it we are united not only with God, but with one another in the bonds of that charity which to Him is as dear as the apple of His eye. Now, she styles it the *Holy Sacrament*, and again, the *Supper of the Lord*; the *Viaticum* for our journey to eternity ; the *Holy Table*; the *Bread of Angels*—and gives to it many other beautiful and expressive titles which all breathe love, adoration, and reverential awe.

Learn, then, from these types or figures, to have for the Holy Eucharist that deep, adoring love which the thoughts, that they will not fail to inspire, usually produce in devout

souls. Look upon it as the sacrifice by which you will be able to atone to God for your sins ; as the Lamb Whose blood will save you from the destroying Angel ; as the bread that will strengthen you to walk unharmed through the snares of the world ; and, as the Viaticum, fortified with which you will fearlessly pass through the gates of death into the arms of Him Whom you have loved and adored, though here below shrouded in the weeds of His humility.

THE PROMISE AND ITS FULFILMENT.

WHEN by means of types or figures God had adequately prepared the minds of men for the coming of the Redeemer, the "Expected of all nations" appeared in the world. The time preordained by the Father had run its course ; the prophecies had been fulfilled ; the shadow had come and gone ; and now the reality stood among men, "and they knew it not". For the deliverer was not that which their carnal minds supposed that He would be. He came, not as a conqueror, but in the meekness and the lowliness of one who willed to be the servant of all. Now that He walked about among men doing good to all, it was but to be expected that He would accomplish that which had been prefigured of Him. He would give that wondrous gift foreshadowed by the manna, the loaves of proposition, the fruit of the tree of life, and the hearth-cake in the strength of which, Elias had walked to the mount of God. In the last year of His public ministry, He promised that He would bestow this gift, and on the eve of His death, He fulfilled His promise. Let us, then, give our minds for a few moments to the consideration both of the promise and of its fulfilment.

On two different occasions, Our Lord worked a stupendous miracle to prove His complete control over matter, in order that those whom He was about to instruct concerning the Eucharistic mystery, might the more readily believe all that He was about to say. On the first of these occasions, He so satisfied the hunger of a miscellaneous crowd numbering upwards of 5000 persons, that out of the five barley loaves

with which He feasted them, there were gathered twelve baskets of fragments. On the second, the multitude fed by Him with seven small loaves, numbered more than 4000, and the remnants of their meal filled seven baskets. It was upon the day after this second miracle, that the crowds once more gathered round Him at Capharnaum. This was the opportunity of which He availed Himself to speak to them of the Eucharist, and to promise them a bread that should satisfy every desire. He, therefore, began His discourse to them with the words: "You seek Me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you." These words caused them to ask what they were to do in order to do the work of God. Our Lord answered that they were to believe in Him: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He hath sent". Thereupon they asked Him what sign, what work He could point to as a proof of His divine mission; for, when the great leader Moses was sent by God, one of the works by which he proved his authority to guide them to the Promised Land, was the wondrous act of giving them bread from heaven.

To this, Our Lord replied: "Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world." The celestial origin and the wondrous properties of this miraculous food, drew from the people the very natural request: "Lord, give us always this bread". Thereupon Jesus uttered the startling words: "I am the bread of life," and straightway went on to insist upon the necessity for faith, trust, belief in Him, inasmuch as what He was about to promise and afterwards to accomplish, would require on their part, the most unbounded faith. This seems to have been lost upon them; the more marvellous assertion which had preceded it, apparently absorbing all their thoughts; for the Evangelist recounts how they murmured because He had said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven".

Jesus, hearing their words of dissent, exhorted them not to continue in that frame of mind, and again insisted on the necessity for faith in Him. Immediately after reasserting this, He said to them : “ I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat of it, he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever ; and the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world.” This plain, unmistakable language drew from the crowd that listened to Him, loud murmurs of dissent, and questions which showed how impossible they deemed it that He should be able to give them His flesh to eat. In spite, however, of their murmurs, He repeats the statement that He had already made, and asserts it once more in even plainer and stronger language than He had yet employed : “ Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day, for My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed ; he that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.”¹

In these words we have the Son of God speaking of Himself as the living bread, proclaiming the necessity for all to eat His flesh, to drink His blood, and promising that He would give that divine, that heavenly sustenance to all that should come to Him, and should believe that He had the power to effect that which He promised.

Let us now see how He accomplished the promise which He that day had publicly made at Capharnaum. The Evangelist takes us in spirit to the upper room in which with the Apostles Jesus is about to celebrate His last festival of the

¹ St. John vi. 1-59.

Pasch. It is the eve of the day on which He is to die upon the Cross to expiate the sins of the world, by that great sacrifice which He is to perpetuate in the rite now about to be instituted. As soon as the legal supper of the Passover was ended, Our Lord rose from the table, girded Himself with a towel, and taking water in a basin, knelt before each of His followers, washed the feet of all, and wiped them with the cloth with which He was girded. Then returning to His place at table, He set about the fulfilment of the promise made to the people. Taking into His sacred hands the bread which had been prepared for Him, He first blessed it, then broke it, and distributed it among His Apostles saying : "Take ye and eat : This is My body". And taking the chalice He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying : "Drink ye all of this. For this is My blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins."¹

After He had thus redeemed His promise of giving to mankind His flesh to eat and His blood to drink, St. Luke records that He ordered His Apostles to do as He had done, to consecrate bread and wine in the same way and with the same words with which He had consecrated these elements.² By so doing, and by partaking of the mystic feast thus prepared by the hands of the Lord, St. Paul assures the Corinthians that they should show forth the death of the Lord, that is to say, renew in a mystical way the great sacrifice of the Cross, until the day of doom : "As often as you shall eat of this bread and drink of the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come".³ The shadows have passed ; the reality has come ; the promise made, has been most nobly accomplished. We have God with us. He said that He would not leave us orphans, and that promise too has been fulfilled.

Consequently, whenever in the sacrifice of the Mass a rightly ordained priest pronounces over the Eucharistic elements those mystic words first used by Christ, and by Him ordered to be used till the end of time, there are present under the species

¹ St. Matt. xxvi.

² St. Luke xxii. 19.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

or appearances of bread and of wine, the body, the blood, the soul, and the Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. These elements, it is true, are two in number, but yet they constitute only one sacrament ; for though twofold, their signification is essentially only one, to wit, the food of our souls.

Remember, then, that the Eucharist though twofold in the matter out of which it is made, is yet but one sacrament. In the act of being constituted or made, it is a sacrifice ; after the consecration, it is a sacrament. As a sacrament, therefore, it differs from all the others in these three ways : the others consist in a transient act, this, in a permanent thing ; the others do not change the matter out of which, as theologians express it, they are *confected*, this entirely transforms it, retaining only the appearances which that matter previously had ; the others, as we have just remarked, are sacraments only, this is at once a sacrament and a sacrifice.

Believe, then, with firm, unwavering faith, that which Jesus Christ has so plainly taught. You believe that He is God. You believe that He can do all things. He tells you that He is the living bread which came down from heaven ; that you must eat that bread which is His flesh, and drink that wine which is His blood. Accept His word which cannot be untrue. Fall down and adore Him under the mean elements by which He deigns to communicate Himself to you. Obey His command. Eat of His bread and drink of His cup. You will be sowing in your flesh the seeds of everlasting life. He will raise you up in the last day, and you will live with Him for ever.

THE REAL PRESENCE.

IN the preceding Lecture, we have reverently considered the promise made by Our Lord to the people, that He would give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink ; we have said that when at the "Last Supper" He took bread and wine into His hands and said : "This is My body, this is My blood," He redeemed His promise. If He did so, then we have in the

Sacrament of the Eucharist the body and the blood, the soul and the Divinity of Christ. He is there truly, really, and substantially present under the appearances of those mean elements. This has been, from the very beginning, the invariable teaching of the Catholic Church. The first to strike a discordant note and mar the harmony of her doctrine, was Berengarius, who died in 1088. He was followed by most of the innovators of the sixteenth century. These maintained, that, in the words which we have cited from the sixth chapter of St. John, Our Lord did not make any promise to institute the Eucharist, but that He spoke simply of faith in Himself, and that His words about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, are to be understood, not of an oral, material eating, but of a spiritual one, to wit, by faith.

In order to strengthen your belief in the teaching of Holy Church, it will, therefore, be well to lay before you convincing proofs, that in the sixth chapter of St. John, Jesus is not speaking of faith, but of the Eucharist, and not of a spiritual eating of it, but of a material or oral one.

Any one who carefully reads the words in which Our Lord conveys His doctrine to the people who, on that ever memorable occasion listened to Him, cannot fail to notice that He institutes an analogy between the manna which Moses gave to their fathers in the desert, and the bread which He promised to give to them. Now, the manna was real bread, and, therefore, that also which He meant to give them must be bread, that is to say, the Eucharist.¹ That He did not mean *faith*, is furthermore proved by the phraseology which He used on this occasion. His words were to the effect that they must "eat His flesh and drink His blood". They accepted these words in their literal sense, and Jesus, though He saw plainly that they did so, did not, as was His custom on other occasions, correct the idea which they had gathered from them. He continued to repeat that which He had already

¹ That is to say, "*bread*" the substance of which has been changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, only the "*accidents*" or appearances of bread being left, after the words of consecration.

said. The only *figurative* meaning which they could attach to His words was one not representing belief in Him, but a grave injury to His reputation by the circulation of calumnies and evil reports. This, it was impossible for them to assign to His words, for, "to calumniate Him," would have been a strange act to impose as a condition for the reception from His Father, of the reward of eternal life.

As a further proof that He spoke to them of the great Sacrament which was to be the central object of the worship of His Church, you may observe that throughout His discourse He opposes food to drink, flesh to blood, eating to drinking. Now, antithetical language of this kind would be quite out of place, if there were question of faith only; and it would be particularly out of place when treating of a matter in which the object of the eating and the drinking is directly pointed out as it undoubtedly was by Our divine Lord.

Take notice, also, that when promising to give them this heavenly bread, He makes use of the future tense: "The bread which I will give you, is My flesh for the life of the world". How can these words, even by the most dexterous manipulation, be twisted into meaning "faith"? The Jews already expected the Messias; they had faith in Him. Therefore, by the words "which I will give," Our Lord evidently pointed to some other food, quite distinct from faith. What other food could it be but that Eucharistic bread which He afterwards consecrated at His Last Supper, and ordered the Apostles to consecrate, and in their persons, those also who should succeed them, even until the consummation of the world?

These reasons are so cogent, that even some of the bitterest opponents of this dogma of Catholic faith, have admitted that there can be no doubt that, in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, Our Lord is treating of the Eucharist, though they maintain that it is of the Eucharist to be received in a spiritual sense. While accepting this concession on their part for what it is worth, we maintain that He is there treating not only of the Eucharist, but of the Eucharist to be eaten as food, that is to say, of the real or oral eating of His flesh, and of the

real or oral drinking of His blood, under the Eucharistic species. To maintain this, is to profess belief in the real presence of Christ in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

That Our divine Lord meant His words to be taken in this sense, is evident from the way in which the people who heard them understood them, and from the conduct of Our Lord when He saw that they accepted them in their literal signification. The adversaries of the real presence admit, that the people took the words of the Redeemer to mean oral eating and oral drinking, for they taunt us with understanding them in the same sense.

Now when Our Lord saw that His words were taken literally, how did He act? Did He attempt to explain them away? Did He, as was His usual custom, correct them and put the matter still more clearly before His hearers? No, He did nothing of the kind. He repeated what He had already said. Not content with once enunciating His proposition, He went so far as thrice to state it in the self-same words. Even this did not satisfy Him. As if to leave no possible doubt that He intended the Jews to carry away the literal meaning of all that He had said, He introduced this repetition of His teaching with the strong asseveration: "Amen, amen, I say unto you".

Their loud murmurs against His doctrine made Him insist only the more: "My flesh," He says, "is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed". Then, changing the phrase, He joins meat and drink together, and says: "He that eateth Me shall live by Me," by these words excluding all allusion to His violent death. Finally, to confirm the truth of what He had said, He appeals to the miracle of His ascension into heaven, to show that He had the power to accomplish His promise, and to convince them that their eating of His flesh and their drinking of His blood, though both real and oral, would not be in the gross, carnal way in which they thought that He would give them that flesh to eat and that blood to drink. He says: "Does this scandalise you? If then you shall see the Son of Man going up where He was before,"—that is to say, "If you shall see Me ascending into heaven, you will cease to

be scandalised." Rather than go back one jot or tittle on that which He had said, He suffers His disciples to leave Him, whereas if He had meant anything different from the literal signification of His words, He might so easily have rectified their misconception of them.

Nay, He gives to His chosen twelve the option of accepting His teaching, or of leaving Him, as the rest had done. If to all these reasons we add the fact that the Evangelists, who were always accustomed to explain any obscurities of language in Our Lord's speech, in the sense in which He would have them understood, are here silent and leave His words just as they fell from His adorable lips ; if we bear in mind that the Fathers of the Church for the first six centuries have interpreted those words as we interpret them ; if, moreover, we consider the practice of the early Church which administered the Eucharist to recently baptised infants, because of these words of Our Lord : " Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall have no life in you," we must conclude that the great Teacher spoke of the real or oral eating of His flesh, and the real or oral drinking of His blood, and not of any merely spiritual participation of them by a lively act of faith.

Consequently, the doctrine of the Catholic Church concerning the Holy Eucharist is, that under the appearances of bread and wine there are really, truly, and substantially present the body, the blood, the soul, and the Divinity of Jesus Christ, true God and true man. If, on hearing this, any one feels inclined, like the carnal-minded Jews, to exclaim : " This saying is hard, and who can hear it ? " let him call to mind his belief in the great mystery of the Incarnation. Let him transport himself, in spirit, to the days when the Redeemer walked abroad among men. What does he see ? He beholds a man, in all appearance, like himself. That man eats, sleeps, drinks, converses, and asks questions, as he himself does. Yet He is God ! We may fall down and adore Him, as we should fall down and adore Him seated on the throne of heaven, surrounded by His Saints and Angels. Through His eyes, God is looking into ours ; through His mouth, God is

speaking to our ears ; by that tongue, God will pronounce our eternal doom.

Go back for a few years. You see a wailing infant in a stable ; you see a little boy standing amid the Doctors, in the Temple-court ; you see a carpenter working at his bench ; you see a teacher conversing with men ; you see a criminal—in the eyes at least of His enemies—hanging on the Cross. You believe that He is God ! After believing that, can you feel any difficulty in believing in the Eucharist ? True, there is no sign of the Divinity to be discovered in the host. Neither is there any sign of the Godhead in Him that hangs upon the Cross. God is a hidden God. Clouds and darkness compass Him about. Faith, humble faith, must be our strong light to pierce through the coverings in which He enfolds Himself. The eye which sees by it, will perceive God in the Sacrament ; the heart which is warmed by its fire, will love Him ; the will that is quickened by it, will bend the intelligence to accept His word, to rely upon it, for He is the truth, and He cannot lead us into error.

THE EUCHARIST AS A SACRIFICE.

AFTER the words of consecration pronounced in the Mass by a rightly ordained priest, the Eucharist is constituted a Sacrament, that is to say, a visible sign, ordained by Christ, to convey divine grace to the soul. But the act by which it is so constituted, is a sacrifice of which it is necessary that you should have a clear notion before we furnish you with the reasons which will establish our assertion, and put it beyond either doubt or cavil.

The word “sacrifice” may be taken either in its wide, or in its strict sense. In its wide sense, it means any interior or any exterior act of religion. In its strict sense it denotes a mark existing in anything, by which mark we profess that God is the author of life and of death. In this latter sense, a sacrifice may be either *absolute*—that is to say, without any relation to anything else, as when a lamb is slain and offered to God—or *relative*—that is to say, having reference to some

other sacrifice which has preceded it, and of which it is a commemoration. Of this latter kind is the sacrifice of the Mass, in which the Eucharist is consecrated. It is referred to and is commemorative of the sacrifice of the Cross. It represents, by the separate consecration of the bread and the wine, and represents in a mystical way, the immolation of the divine Victim which took place upon the Cross on Calvary. As a *real* change was effected in the Victim offered upon that ever-memorable occasion, a similar one is not requisite in the elements offered up in the sacrifice of the Mass, which is a commemorative and not an absolute sacrifice. A change like unto that effected in the Victim on Calvary is not necessary, for the simple reason that the essence of sacrifice consists in the note or mark by which we signify that God is the author of life and of death. As, then, this note exists in the relative or commemorative sacrifice, it follows that it is a true and proper sacrifice, although in it no visible change takes place in the victim offered up to God. That change, as we have said, took place in the preceding or absolute sacrifice. Therefore, since by the consecration of the element of wine distinct from the consecration of the element of bread, Christ is put upon the altar in the same state as was that in which He hung dead upon the Cross, there is in the Mass a true sacrifice, although in the elements no visible change has taken place; for by His presence there, as it were immolated, God is worshipped as the author of life and of death; and Christ, by this mystical immolation, exhibits to men the same sacrifice that He offered to His Father by the pouring forth of His blood upon the Cross. A bare sign or symbol of the august Victim then immolated for our sins, would not suffice to constitute this relative sacrifice. The Victim Himself must be there; for, if He were not, the sacrifice would be but a shadow of that which preceded it.

With these preliminary notions of sacrifice clearly before your minds, we may now proceed to establish the truth of the statement which we have made—that in the Mass, a true and proper sacrifice is offered to God.

The Catholic Church maintains and teaches that when, at

the Last Supper, Our Lord instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist, He offered up to His Eternal Father a true and proper sacrifice. In the Sacred Scripture it is expressly stated, that He then ordered His Apostles, and through them those who should succeed to their power and their ministry, to do that which He had done. After His resurrection from the dead, they most exactly complied with His injunctions, and as the same Sacred Writings bear witness, they were diligent in the breaking of the bread, and in the blessing of the chalice. Now, the sacred rite by which they put into execution this last solemn order given to them by their Lord, we call the Holy Mass. It is evident, therefore, that in it there is offered to God a true and proper sacrifice ; for it is only that which Christ did, and which He ordered His Apostles to do, in memory of that ignominious death which He suffered for the salvation of the world.

Now the sacrifice which Christ offered up to God, in the institution of the Eucharist, was a relative sacrifice ; it referred to that absolute one which He offered on the following day, by dying on the Cross. The Mass also is a similar sacrifice, since it refers to the sacrifice of the Cross. Consequently, all that is requisite to make it a true and proper sacrifice, is the real presence of Christ on the altar, and the representation of His death, by a mystical immolation. He is really present in the Eucharist, as has already been proved in the preceding Lecture, and He is mystically immolated by the consecration of the element of wine, separately from the bread. Therefore, at the Last Supper, Our Lord offered to His Father a true and proper sacrifice, and, consequently, in the Mass there is also offered to Him a true and proper sacrifice, for it is only that which Christ then ordered His Apostles to do.

This conclusion will receive still further confirmation, if you bear in mind the sacred rite which immediately preceded the institution of the Eucharist. That was the immolation of the Paschal Lamb, a true and real sacrifice by which the Jews commemorated their deliverance from Egypt. In the place of that figurative sacrifice, Our Lord substituted the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, we must conclude that if the mere

shadow of the reality was a sacrifice, with still greater reason must the reality itself be one. That St. Paul regarded it in this light, is put beyond a doubt, by the antithesis which he institutes between the sacrifices offered by the heathen to their false gods, and the Eucharistic sacrifice offered up by the priests of the New Law to the Eternal Father: “Behold Israel according to the flesh: are not they that eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? . . . But the things which the heathen sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that you should be made partakers with devils. You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils.”¹ In these words, he opposes table to table, altar to altar, chalice to chalice; and, therefore, as the sacrifices of the heathens were really sacrifices, though offered to false divinities, he is evidently impressing upon the minds of his disciples, that they had now a new sacrifice of which no one could partake who shared in the oblations offered to idols.

In the new dispensation, the existence of that sacrifice, of which the Apostle was speaking, is proved with even greater cogency, by the famous prophecy of Malachias. Addressing the Jews, in the name of God, he says: “I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts; and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For, from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation; for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord.”² What do these words, in the plainest language, announce to that disobedient and stiff-necked people? They proclaim the abrogation of the legal sacrifices which were but figures of one that was to come; they announce the substitution in their place of a new sacrifice, far more holy and pleasing unto God than they were; they foretell the oblation of that same sacrifice throughout the whole world. Has this prophecy been fulfilled? It has, and to the very letter. For among

¹ 1 Cor. x. 18.

² Mal. i. 10.

the Jewish people, sacrifice has ceased to be one of their religious rites ; the Eucharist is the only sacrifice that is now offered among Christian peoples ; and the sun never sets upon any place in which that clean oblation is made to the living God. Therefore, either the Eucharist is a sacrifice, or that prophecy has not been accomplished. If it has not been accomplished, then the Prophet is not a prophet of the Lord, but of Baal.

If to these proofs we add the constant, unvarying teaching of the ever-living Church ; the doctrine on this point contained in all the liturgical books used during the Eucharistic sacrifice ; the belief of even heretics separated from the Catholic Church ; the writings of the Fathers, in which the Eucharist is called an oblation, a victim, a host, a sacrifice,—we have for this truth an argument of which the cumulative force is irresistible.

Lastly, let us bear in mind that as sacrifice is a religious rite by which we profess God to be the Supreme Lord of all things, it is the chief act of all religions ; for since the world began, scarcely any form of religious worship has been without it. It is necessary, therefore, that the Christian religion also should have its sacrifice. For if it had not, it would be without that kind of worship which, as all without exception admit, is best suited to honour the Godhead. But among Christians, what other sacrifice is there than that of the Holy Eucharist ? Evidently there is none except indeed such as only improperly, or in a wide sense, can be called sacrifices. Therefore, theological reason requires, that in the Christian religion there should be the supreme rite of sacrifice.

Consequently, from all that has been said we may conclude that, in the Mass, there is offered unto God, not a sacrifice of mere praise and of thanksgiving, not an empty memorial of the sacrifice of Calvary, but a real and true sacrifice in the strict meaning of the word, a sacrifice in which the body and the blood of Christ, mystically slain by the separate consecration of the wine, are offered up to the Eternal Father, for the benefit of the living and the dead ; for the remission of their sins ; and in satisfaction of all the debts which by them they have contracted towards the divine Majesty.

DISPOSITIONS FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

WHENEVER a Sovereign intends to visit any of the great cities of his realm, the chief magistrates and the people vie with each other in their efforts to dress it out in holiday attire, so that nothing offensive may meet his eye, but that even the inanimate buildings may speak to him words of welcome, and testify to him the pleasure which his coming gives to the hearts of his faithful subjects. So should it be with each of you, when Jesus is about to visit you in Holy Communion. You should make ready to receive Him, to welcome Him into your heart, and to profess to Him your loyalty and your love. This preparation must be made both in your body and in your soul ; and of what nature that preparation should be, we will now endeavour to tell you, in language so plain and simple that the youngest among you will be able clearly to understand what is required of him.

We need scarcely remind you that, in the first place, the utmost cleanliness of person, neatness of attire, and modesty of demeanour are expected of you, when you present yourself as a guest at the Table of the Lord. You would be scrupulously exact in all these particulars if you were invited to dine with even one of your masters, or a Bishop, or a magnate of the land. How much greater care, then, ought you to bestow on these minor details, when you are to be the honoured guest of Jesus Christ ! We do not lay any stress upon this comparatively unimportant matter ; for God looks not upon the outward covering, but upon the inward adornment of the soul. Yet, though this is quite true, we feel sure that any one who loves so gentle a Master, will not fail to testify in his outward carriage and covering, the inward respect of his heart.

Taking it, then, for granted, that as far as you are able you will not fail to do for your Lord that which you would certainly do for a mortal man, the next preparation for Holy Communion, on the part of the body, is that you should be fasting from the midnight previous to the day on which you are to receive the body of Jesus Christ. You must not take

anything whatever in the way of meat or of drink, no matter how small that thing may be. If you do, you must not dare to approach the holy altar ; for this precept is one of the Church's strictest enactments, by which she wishes to inspire you with the deepest respect for that heavenly food. It is a precept sanctioned by the universal practice of the Church ; carefully transmitted from age to age by religiously guarded tradition ; approved of by all the rituals in use among the faithful ; and solemnly decreed by one of the Canons of the Council of Constance.¹

In order, however, to protect you from all scrupulosity in this respect, you must remember that to break this fast three things are required. In the first place, that which is taken must be taken *from without*, for the simple reason that whatever does not come from without, even though it is voluntarily swallowed, cannot be called either *eating* or *drinking*. Hence, to swallow any blood that flows from the inside of the mouth, the gums, or the tongue, does not break the fast requisite for Communion. Secondly, that which is taken, must be taken by way of eating or of drinking, because as the common sense of men tells us, it is only in that way that the natural fast is broken. Consequently, if in running to the church a boy were to swallow some dust or even a fly, he would not break his fast ; for he has not taken these things by way of eating or of drinking, but by way of respiration or breathing. Thirdly, the thing taken must have the nature of food or of drink, that is to say, it must be something which in the stomach can be altered into nourishment for the body. Thus, for instance, if, as boys sometimes do, any one were to put a piece of money into his mouth and swallow it, he would not break his fast, for silver, or copper, or any other metal, cannot be said to have the nature of food.

Now, although the law of fasting before Holy Communion is so strict, there are certain cases in which the Church dispenses with her own ordinance, and permits those who have taken food, to receive the Sacred Host. These are when a

person is in danger of death, no matter from what cause that danger may arise ; when there is fear that the Sacred Species may be either profaned or destroyed ; when from the omission of Mass or of Communion there is proximate peril of scandal ; and, lastly, when the sacrifice of the Mass has to be completed, an instance of which would be, the sudden illness or the death of a priest after having consecrated either one or both the elements. Then any priest, even though not fasting, might go to the altar and complete the Holy Sacrifice, and he is obliged to do so.

As we have already remarked, the dispositions of the soul are those about which you must be particularly and especially solicitous, before approaching the altar of the Lord. These are of two kinds : remote dispositions which should be, as it were, the habitual state of the soul ; and proximate, which should be stirred up within it immediately before the act of receiving the Sacred Species. As for the remote dispositions, the first and most obvious is to keep the soul free from the frightful guilt of deadly sin. That lamentable evil makes it the bond slave of the devil, and encrusts it with a leprosy far more loathsome in the eyes of God than was that from which the Jews used to flee away with shuddering horror. What union, then, can there be between one who is the devil's thrall and Jesus Who is spotless purity ! Who will dare, while covered with the hideous, gaping wounds of that frightful malady, to throw his arms round Jesus Christ, and kiss His adorable face ? Evidently, then, the first step to be taken by one who aspires to receive into his bosom the spotless Victim immolated for our sins, is to endeavour to be free from all that would offend His most pure eyes, and move His soul to disgust and horror. He must prove himself, by searching into the folds of his conscience, and casting thence what is displeasing to God. He must go humbly to the fountain of Penance, and let the cleansing waters be poured over his unclean, filth-stained soul. Having once obtained from that healing source freedom from the malady and the filth of sin, it must be his constant endeavour to preserve himself from ever again contracting its taint. Oh ! how wretched is the state of those who week after

week approach Our Lord, only to plunge back again into the mire from which they have been drawn, to contract the disease of which they have been healed, and to rivet on, once more, the chains from which they have been delivered! Nevertheless, though habitual freedom from sin is the best remote preparation for Holy Communion, the next is certainly the daily, unflagging struggle to be rid of it, though that struggle is marked by innumerable failures, by frequent falls.

Besides this, there must also be an attempt to be rid of all wilful defects, of those little venial sins, of which, alas! so many boys make so small account! They are offensive to God, they disgust Him, though they do not deprive you of His friendship. Therefore, in preparation for Holy Communion, make war upon them also. Strive to be less giddy, less dissipated, less obstinate. Do not be so susceptible of every little slight, of every inconsiderate word. Let there be no sullenness in your behaviour, no insubordination in your conduct towards Superiors. Root out of your heart that vanity which makes you so greedy of praise, and so self-sufficient. But particularly be merciless to all selfishness. Fight against these things. Lay hold of them, and drive them from your heart. Though you will never be able during your mortal life to be absolutely free from them, yet the constant war which you wage against them, will, like constant weeding of a garden, keep your soul clean and pleasing to the eyes of God.

As for your proximate preparation, which ought immediately to precede your reception of the Holy Sacrament, let that consist, first, in a most lively faith. Believe with all your soul that which Christ has said. Rely upon His word. He has said that in the Eucharist there are present His body and His blood, His soul and His Divinity. Nothing can be so true, so certain as the word of Truth. From firm faith in Him, the transition to a lively hope is easy and natural. There present is God, infinitely good and infinitely rich. The soul, considering this, at once feels within it a firm confidence and hope that He will give to it all of which it stands in need. To faith and hope, join a most ardent love, for in the Eucharist, God has given you the most striking proof of

His love. He has descended so low as to reduce Himself to be your food, in order to be united with you. He has no interest in so doing except to win your love.

Oh ! then, stir up within your poor human heart a burning love for Him Who hath first so loved you. Then looking at the worthlessness of yourself, fall down in humble adoration before Him protesting your unworthiness, saying with St. Peter : "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord !" and with the Centurion : " I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof ". Animate yourself, lastly, with a burning desire for the coming of your Lord, and pour forth to Him most heartfelt acts of sorrow for sin. With dispositions such as these, approach the Holy Table. God is there with outstretched arms ready to receive you. He will make good whatever defects there may be in you, and will pour into your soul graces to strengthen you, and to preserve you from the evil of sin. He will clasp you to His sacred heart, and while you lean your head upon His bosom, ask with confidence for everything of which you stand in need. He can refuse you nothing, Who has given you Himself.

EFFECTS OF HOLY COMMUNION.

OUR divine Lord, when speaking to the people of the august Sacrament, which throughout all time was to be the central object of their worship, and the aliment of their spiritual life, made use of words which, as plainly as human words can convey an idea to the intelligence, taught them that He meant to give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. He said to them : " I am the bread of life : My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. . . . Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." The Holy Eucharist, then, in which that flesh and that blood are really, truly, and substantially present, is the food with which we are to sustain our spiritual life. Therefore, there will be between its effects upon our soul, and the effects of our ordinary food upon our body, a most striking analogy. Let us, then, attentively consider these effects, because

they will serve to give us a greater appreciation of the Most Holy Sacrament, and make us more eager to partake of the countless blessings which it imparts.

Our corporeal food, when taken into our body, at once becomes most intimately united with us. In fact, *union* is hardly a strong enough term to convey a right notion of the closeness of that connection ; for the functions of our material being transform that food into our very substance, so that it becomes identified with ourselves. It is made bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. A somewhat similar, but even closer union is effected within us, by the reception into our bosoms of that spiritual food which Christ gives to us in the Sacrament of His love ; for though it is, as we say, a spiritual food, yet it is at the same time in very truth, " meat indeed, and drink indeed ". He who eats it abides in God, and God in him. But whereas in the case of merely corporeal food, we change into our own substance whatever we eat, in the case of the Eucharist it is we ourselves that, in a certain sense, are changed by its operation upon us, into God. " I do not," says St. Augustine, " change Thee into myself, but Thou dost change me into Thee."

Hence it is that St. Cyril goes so far as to compare the union effected between the soul and God by Holy Communion, to the union existing between two pieces of molten wax fused together in the same vessel. Consequently, after a worthy Communion, the child of God may with truth be said no longer to live by his own life, but to be animated with the vital force which is in Christ Jesus : " It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me ". Some do not hesitate to say, that he is thereby made a participator in the divine nature. He begins here upon earth that felicity which he is to enjoy in heaven. He tastes how sweet Jesus Christ is ; he fully possesses Him ; Jesus is all for him, and he is all for Jesus. True, that actual union is but short-lived, lasting only as long as the Sacred Species retain their sacramental nature ; but the moral union between the soul and God, consisting in the abundance of sanctifying grace left in the soul by His contact with it, lasts as long as the

soul retains the friendship of its Lord, by keeping itself free from the guilt of deadly sin.

The transformation of the food which we take, into our very substance, has a most beneficial effect upon us. It feeds our life, and by so doing keeps up our strength. It is for our life what fuel is for a fire, what oil is for a lamp. If fuel were not heaped upon a furnace, and oil were not poured into a lamp, the furnace would soon be extinguished, and the lamp would go out. So with our life. Without a regular supply of food, it would speedily be quenched within us. Now, the life of our soul is divine grace ; it is its strength ; and that which feeds its life, which sustains its strength, is the Eucharistic bread in which is the very source of grace. That bread increases the closeness of the union between God and the soul which is free from stain. It causes the fire of its love to burn with a more intense heat. It expels its small faults ; and by so doing daily purifies it more and more. It cools the heat of passion, a heat which the primal fall has left in the blood. It gives it power to stand firm against the onslaught of its enemies and to repulse their attacks. If in the past those enemies have been accepted by the soul as its friends, if under this guise they have spoiled it of its robe of innocence, stripped it of its treasures, and wounded it even unto death, the Eucharistic bread heals all its wounds, restores to it its white robe, and pours out abundant riches at its feet. It restores to it the taste for virtue, a taste which the poison of sin had destroyed ; it enables it once more to practise virtue, and applies a remedy to the exhaustion which it feels in consequence of its loss of vital force. What is all this but the result of that strength ministered to the soul by the living bread which came down from heaven ?

We have mentioned enemies who wage war upon the soul, to rob it of its wealth and to destroy its life ; now, besides strength to resist these, the Eucharistic bread brings to our assistance a force that is simply irresistible. This is none other than the might of God Himself. For the Eucharist is not merely a spiritual bread which communicates to the soul spiritual strength, it is a *living* bread, a personality, Jesus Christ Himself. Therefore, while endowing the soul with a

might which comes from His own divinised flesh, He is within it, as the strong man armed, keeping his court. Now, short as your experience has been, it has lasted quite long enough to convince you of the pressing need there is of so powerful an ally. Both by day and by night, enemies innumerable are flitting about your soul seeking for an entrance. They sleep not. They are never weary. Their hostility is never for a moment abated. By suggestion, by the imagination, by solicitation, by open assault, they give you no rest. But notwithstanding all their hate, all their activity, all the untold resources at their command for compassing your ruin, they must flee away baffled when they perceive their Lord, their Master, their Conqueror, enthroned in the sanctuary of your heart. He never permits even those who do not receive Him, to be tried beyond their strength. He gives them graces amply sufficient to render them invincible.

What an overwhelming superiority, then, must He not throw upon the side of those of whom He is the loving guest? If they please, they may with safety defy the united forces of all the infernal host. Hence, we can easily understand why our holy Mother the Church is so pressing in her exhortations to us, frequently to eat of that living bread, and to drink of that chalice of salvation. Animated with the spirit of her divine Spouse, she wills all men to be saved, and she knows that their eternal welfare is secure, if they will frequently approach and ally themselves with the mighty God, at Whose name all the powers of hell tremble and bend the knee.

This sense of security, is indeed a great boon to us, poor wayfarers on earth, living as we do in the midst of perils innumerable. But there are yet two other benefits which it is good for us briefly to call to mind. These are, a foretaste of the happiness of heaven, even while imprisoned in our mortal flesh, and an assurance that our frail bodies which have been nourished with the Eucharistic bread, will rise from the tomb, immortal and impassible, like the body of Our divine Lord Himself. What does that generous Master promise us? He tells us, first, that whoever eats His flesh and drinks

His blood "hath" everlasting life. In what does that life in eternity consist? It consists in union with God. Therefore, by the reception of the Holy Eucharist, we possess God as really and as truly as the elect in heaven possess Him. But with us, the Lord is behind a veil ; "clouds and darkness compass Him about". The veil is our mortal flesh which hides Him from our eyes. When that is torn away by the hand of death, our union with Him will continue, but then it will be in a perfect way ; the darkness will have lifted ; the clouds will have roiled away ; and we shall see Him face to face, and as He is.

While awaiting that moment, we have a foretaste of the bliss to come. Our union with God is as *real* as it will be in heaven ; but we cannot appreciate it so fully now as we shall when in the kingdom of Our Father. But besides promising an eternity of bliss to those who eat of that heavenly bread, Our Lord, with the boundless liberality of His sacred heart, does not forget the frail tabernacle of our bodies which have fed upon the manna sent down from heaven. Because they have had the unspeakable happiness and privilege of having had a share in that angelic food, He goes on to say : "And I will raise him up on the last day". Those Holy Communions which have united the body and the soul to the body and the soul of Jesus, have deposited in the material of our perishable flesh, a germ of eternal life. God has but to turn the sunlight of His divine countenance upon the dust into which our flesh has been reduced, and that germ will expand and grow till it infuse throughout our frame, which God's power has once again built up to be the soul's dwelling-place, that immortal vigour which will hold it together for all eternity.

Oh ! how liberal is Our good God to those who lovingly and humbly comply with His own divine command to eat His flesh and to drink His blood, in the mystic feast of the Eucharist ! Strive always to be clothed in that spotless wedding garment which will procure you admittance into His banqueting hall. He will receive you with open arms. He will unite you closely to Himself ; He will strengthen you with His own divine force ; He will aid you to fight and conquer your enemies ;

He will plant in your flesh the seeds of that immortal life, which you are to lead with Him when the day of your mortal existence is over, and the bright dawn of your eternal life has poured its first golden rays upon your delighted soul.

AN UNWORTHY COMMUNION.

WE have considered the unspeakable benefits which result from a worthy reception of the Most Holy Sacrament. It most intimately unites the soul with the sacred heart of Jesus ; it endows it with a supernatural force which makes it a terror to the devils ; it furnishes it with a powerful ally from Whom they flee away ; it plants even in our mortal flesh a germ which will enable it to live for all eternity. If, then, a worthy partaking of that heavenly bread is fraught with so many blessings, by how many ills must the unworthy eating of it be followed ! It is eaten unworthily, whenever any one dares to partake of it, while he is conscious of being in the state of mortal sin. To approach the Holy Eucharist in this state, is to be guilty of a frightful sacrilege, that is to say, to be guilty of the profanation of a sacred thing. Therefore, as the Blessed Sacrament is the holiest of holy things, nay, is holiness itself, the profanation of it is the most awful of all other sacrileges. Is it possible that any one should carry his malice so far, as to stain his soul with a crime of so deep a dye ? Alas ! we are forced sorrowfully to admit, that this indignity to the body of Our Lord is not by any means so uncommon as its frightful wickedness would lead us to suppose. That none of you may ever expose himself to the danger of committing so grave a sin, let me during this short Lecture, direct your minds to thoughts which will fill your souls with the utmost horror of it.

Whenever a boy incurs the guilt of a sacrilegious Communion, it is generally in one of these two ways : either he does not, in confession, disclose some mortal sin which he has committed, or he does not mean to give up committing one which he has confessed. In each case he leaves the sacred tribunal without having had his soul cleansed from its stains,

and with the additional guilt of having profaned the Sacrament of Penance, that is to say, with the guilt of sacrilege. In this state, he approaches the holy altar, and receives the body and the blood of the Lord. That is an act at which the Angels must shudder. But bad as it is, it is rendered still worse by the circumstances which accompany it. It is, let us say, some great festival. All the School makes ready to receive Our Lord. The altar is gaily decorated ; the sacred ministers are clad in gorgeous vestments ; the choir selects its choicest music. The Holy Sacrifice begins, and proceeds till in a hush of the deepest silence, the words ordained by Christ are pronounced, and the Victim that was slain for our sins, is immolated upon the altar. The priest communicates ; and then the boys rise from their places and approach the Holy Table. What recollection, what devotion, what fervour are visible in every youthful face ! Truly, this is a sight which often brings tears of joy into the eyes of men who once again visit the scene of their early years. Among these boys there is one whose soul is not clad in the wedding garment of purity. His hands are joined, his eyes are downcast, his whole person breathes sanctity. No eye can read his heart, save the eye of Him Who is there present in the Host. He kneels with his companions. He receives Our Lord, and returns to his place, where with every demonstration of fervent piety, he returns thanks for that which he has received. What has he done ? He has done what Judas did. He has gone to Jesus Christ ; he has kissed Him ; and has delivered Him up to be trampled upon by devils. He has made an unworthy Communion !

That act has consequences which are terrible enough to make the most obdurate sinner pause, and flee away from the danger of staining his soul with its guilt. They are similar to those which beset the wretched Judas, when he had well-nigh filled up the measure of his iniquities, by swallowing the morsel of consecrated bread presented to him by Jesus Christ. St. John says : " The devil entered into him after the morsel ". He then quitted the company of the Apostles ; he left his Master ; he went out into the darkness of the night—a striking image of

that which had settled down upon his own soul—and joined the enemies who had previously given into his trembling hands, the blood money for which he betrayed Our Lord. So also with the unworthy communicant. His frightful sacrilege removes him farther and farther from God. It breaks the bond of union which held him to the company of Jesus; it plunges him into a darkness of soul so profound, that He does not see the enormity of the crime of which he is guilty; it deprives him of spiritual strength; it presents to him a deadly poison; it thrusts him into the hands of his bitterest enemies; it makes him the slave of the devil. Judas consummated his wickedness by despairing of the mercy of God. He sealed his own damnation by putting an end to his wretched life. Do not these misfortunes sometimes follow unworthy Communions? Oh! if the veil could be lifted, how many should we see whose fate has been precisely similar! Their sacrileges have made them reckless; have extinguished the light of hope in their hearts; have armed their hands against themselves, and plunged them headlong into the abyss of hell.

Need we marvel at this? Just consider what it is to receive unworthily the Most Holy Sacrament! It is to profane the body and the blood of Christ. For as often as we either eat this bread, or drink this blood, we show forth, as St. Paul teaches, the death of the Lord. It is no merely empty representation of that great event, but a real one, in which the same Christ that was immolated upon the Cross, is mystically sacrificed on the altar. Therefore, whoever partakes of this sacrifice while conscious of being in the state of grievous sin, is guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord, just as if he had nailed Him to the Cross, and pierced His sacred heart with a spear. For he renews, in his own bosom, the Passion of Christ. That bosom is the tabernacle of devils, and into it he thrusts Jesus bound, as it were, hand and foot. There once again are enacted the buffeting and the mockery, the unjust condemnation, the scourging and the crowning with thorns, the revilings, the crucifixion, and the death of the Saviour.

The crime of an unworthy communion contains in itself the malice of all these acts. We shudder as we think of those

who spat on the adorable face of Our Jesus ; who smote Him with their fists ; who pushed Him along, when His failing strength made Him halt wearily and stagger in His weakness ; who drove the cruel nails through His hands and His feet ; who mocked Him while He hung in His agony on the Cross. To communicate unworthily, is to be guilty of all this : “ Reus erit corporis et sanguinis Domini ”.¹

In fact, so enormous does the great Apostle deem this crime of profaning the body of the Lord, that he goes on to say: “ He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself ”. Writing as he did to a Grecian community, he alludes to one of the customs usually observed among them at a trial when any one was condemned to death. The criminal was forced to eat the document on which his sentence was written, to signify that it was irrevocable, and that it was impossible to escape the consequences of his deeds. By using this figure of speech, with respect to those who communicate unworthily, he gives them to understand that by their act they incorporate with themselves their own condemnation. The sentence of God against them is changed into their very substance. The seal of reprobation is set upon them. They are marked out as victims for the wrath of God. Is it, then, to be wondered at, that sometimes those who have thus violated the infinite sanctity of God, should have been made at once subject to the devil, and should by him have been grievously tormented and even put to death ? St. Cyprian gives instances which came under his own observation ; and from St. Paul we learn that the Corinthians were scourged by disease and by death because of their unworthy Communions.

May God in His mercy preserve you from ever being guilty of a crime so enormous. But this, like other sins, is to be avoided only by great care and by earnest prayer. Before you dare to approach the Holy Table, you must, as St. Paul says : “ Prove yourself ”. By a careful, diligent examination, you must discover all your wrong-doing. Then looking at it, and at the infinite majesty of God, against Whom it has been

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 27.

directed, you must detest it, you must weep over it bitter tears of sincerest sorrow, you must resolve never again to repeat it. Then if shame at the turpitude of your act should cover your face with crimson blushes, you must pray for the manly courage humbly to confess it. It is shameful to sin, but it is honourable to confess it. But, lest your weakness should prevail, and seal your lips, be careful always to confess first, that which you feel most repugnance to avow. Ask your spiritual Father, who feels for you all the compassion and the love of a tender parent, to help you. He will gladly do so. He will draw forth the poisoned shaft which is drinking up your life's blood, and thus with the help of Our good God, you will never stain your soul with the enormous guilt of a sacrilegious Communion.

A TRUE IDEA OF HOLY COMMUNION.

THERE must have been something very attractive in the expression of Our Lord's face, and in the glance of His eye, for the poor, the lowly, and even little children were never afraid to approach Him. As for these little ones, who know by instinct those who love them, they were always to be found in the crowds which followed the great Teacher ; and when the Apostles, on one occasion, would have thrust them from His presence, He gently restrained their over-great zeal, saying : "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven". That same Lord Who had so large a heart for the young, Who so ardently loved them, and willed to have them ever close to His side, is present with us in the Holy Eucharist. The heart which loved children during the days of its sojourn upon earth, still loves them now under the sacramental veils. The voice which then said : "Suffer them to come unto Me," still invites them, not only to come nigh unto Him, but to eat of His flesh and to drink of His blood. As in His day there were some who would have kept them back, so also in our own there are not wanting those who would exclude them from frequent Communion, and children themselves are often

filled with fears which hold them back. With these fears and objections, we will deal presently ; but, first, let us strive to obtain a right notion of what the Blessed Sacrament is meant for, and that right notion, that clear idea, will help to remove the barriers which keep so many from the banqueting hall of their Father's house.

Strictly speaking, Communion was not intended by Our blessed Lord to unite us to Himself. That union is brought about by the infusion into our souls of His divine grace. Nor is it meant, primarily, to breathe into us the life of grace ; for that life must already be coursing through our veins, before we can venture to approach to the source of life. What, then, is the end or object which Jesus proposes to Himself in giving us the divine food of His body and His blood ? It is to *feed* the life of sanctifying grace by which our soul is united with God. It is to keep up and strengthen our spiritual, our interior life. It is to hinder us from fainting upon our journey through the rough, steep, difficult ways of this world ; to keep up our failing courage during the long and incessant combats which we have to wage with our invisible foes ; to prevent us from losing the sanctity which we have received through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Therefore, the end or purpose of the Holy Eucharist is to *feed* us ; it is to endow us with a force by which we shall be enabled to *persevere*.

This conclusion will make itself more evident still, if you bear in mind that there is between the life of the soul and the life of the body, a very close analogy. As the body cannot subsist without that which ministers to its life, so the soul cannot live its interior, spiritual life, without that which sustains within it divine grace, by means of which it spiritually exists. Now, food does not give life to the body ; it merely nourishes the life which courses like a stream through its various members, and maintains them in that vigorous state which we call *health*. The soul also has its life, resulting from the infusion of divine grace, by which it is closely united with God, the source of all spiritual life. This also stands in need of nourishment. If it does not receive it, that life is speedily extinguished, like a fire that is not kept up by the addition

of fresh fuel. As a matter of fact, then, it is as impossible for the soul to live without the Eucharistic bread, by which its life is fed, as it is for the body to exist without a constant supply of material food. What, then, is the consequence which we draw from this? It is that Holy Communion must never be regarded as a *recompense* awarded for sanctity already acquired, but as a *means* of preserving that sanctity, of increasing our store of it, and of daily advancing more and more in spiritual health and strength. We do not eat because we *are* strong, but that we may *continue* in the strength which we already possess. Therefore, as the taking of food is a frequent, an habitual act, so also should the reception of Holy Communion be with us a frequent, an habitual act. Hence it was the desire of the Fathers who took part in the Council of Trent, that the faithful who assist at each Mass, should not only spiritually, but sacramentally partake of the Holy Eucharist; that they might reap more abundant fruit from the august sacrifice.¹

You see, then, what the mind of Holy Church is with regard to the reception of the Blessed Sacrament. She looks upon it as our food, our nourishment, as a something which we are very frequently to receive, and not as a recompense to be given to those who are far advanced in sanctity.

With her idea firmly fixed in our memory, let us now consider those fears which keep so many away from the Table of the Lord. When we urge them to go frequently to the altar of God, and there receive the bread of life, these fears find expression in various objections. "Father," they will say, "to communicate frequently, I must be far holier than I am at present; the fact of the matter is, I am not worthy to go so often as you desire. Besides, I have found by experience that when I go often, the Holy Sacrament loses its beneficial effects. I am, therefore, afraid of becoming familiar with holy things, and of acquiring a contempt for them, according to the well-known proverb. That this has been the result in my own case is evident from the fact, that when

¹ Sess. 22, Can. 6.

I communicate, I am distracted and without devotion. These are the reasons which fill me with fear, and keep me away from Communion."

If these are the only hindrances which stand in your way, it will not be difficult to remove them, and give you a free passage to the banquet of Him Who says: "Suffer little children to come unto Me".

"You must be holier than you are at present." You evidently look upon Communion as a recompense for sanctity already acquired. It is no such thing. It is, as we have said, a means to acquire sanctity. You must, of course, in order worthily to approach, have sanctity; but that need not be the sanctity of the perfect. All that you need is to be in the state of grace; to be free from the guilt of mortal sin; to desire to avoid it and to wish with all your heart to serve God. This is not very great sanctity. A very ordinary Christian ought to be in these good dispositions. Therefore, be careful never to confound that which is of precept with that which is of counsel. It is of precept that you should be free from deadly sin; it is of counsel that you should be perfect. We should, of course, like to see you perfect; but if you are not, then we must be content with the virtue of an ordinary Christian. This consists in the absence of grievous sin, and in good will. If these dispositions are not in your soul, strive to win them for yourself, and in God's name go to Holy Communion.

"You are not worthy." Alas! this is quite true. But, let me ask, who is worthy to receive the body and the blood of Jesus Christ? If this were a bar to Communion, then no one could communicate. Of course you are unworthy; but the longer you absent yourself from the Holy Table, the more unworthy will you become. What do you do when you are cold, or hungry, or unwell? You go to the fire; you take food; you consult a physician, and gladly swallow his remedies. Jesus is a brightly burning fire. He is the bread of life. He is a skilful physician. Go to Him that you may be warmed; go to Him that you may be fed; go to Him that you may be rid of all your ailments. The Church wishes you to do

so ; she forces you to communicate, not because you are unworthy, but that you may be less unworthy than you actually are.

“ If I go often, Communion loses its beneficial effects upon me.” There is no doubt that frequent Communion tends to lessen the effect which a rarer perception of it produces upon the *imagination* and the *nervous system* ; but the effect which a frequent eating of this bread of Angels produces upon the will, is augmented rather than diminished by the frequency with which we approach the Holy Table. If you want a proof of this, look around among your companions. You will find that the best boys are those who are frequent communicants ; the worst are those who seldom approach to that source of sanctity. The effect which Holy Communion produces upon our senses, on our nerves, in filling us with sensible devotion and sweetness, though by no means to be held in little esteem, is yet not the chief end to be sought for. That which we aim at in eating this living bread, is an increase in virtue, is perseverance in the service of God, is strength to fight and conquer our spiritual foes. Therefore, just as we do not live upon sweets, but upon solid food, so we ought not to look for sensible fervour and make it the staple of our spiritual meat and drink. You may possibly, by rarely communicating, experience a greater degree of this fervour ; but you will not be so strong as one is who frequently eats of the divine bread, just as a man who fasts has more appetite for his food, but he has not the stamina, the strength of him who eats regularly and well. Therefore, aim at increasing your spiritual strength, and do not make so much account of sensible fervour.

As for your fear of becoming familiar with holy things, and in consequence of that familiarity, of beginning to condemn them, you are quite right to be timorous, if by *familiarity* you mean *negligence*, for habit may easily degenerate into routine, just as the use of anything may very quickly slide into the abuse of it. Therefore, by all means fear and guard against routine. But if by familiarity you mean the sweet intimacy of an habitual union with God, then strive with all

your might to acquire it. Who were more devoted, more loving, more respectful to Jesus Christ than His Saints? Yet were there ever any men more familiar with Him? Strive then to form a habit of this familiarity, for then only are boys thoroughly good when God's service is familiar to them—"We do well," says St. Francis of Sales, "that which we do often".

You say that you are distracted and without devotion when you communicate. Well, that surely is no reason for abstaining from the Eucharistic bread. It is a reason for self-abasement, for humiliation before God, but not for withdrawing yourself from Him. St. Peter was full of similar sentiments when he fell at Our Lord's feet and said: "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" What reply did Jesus make to him? He said to him: "Fear not". We address the same words to you. Fear not, your heart is with God, and that is all that He requires. If your distractions be involuntary, they will do you no harm. The Saints had to pass through this Purgatory of devout souls. Yet, in spite of all their dryness and their distractions at prayer and in Holy Communion, they persevered and they won their crown. So will it be with you also.¹

Therefore, go frequently to the Holy Table, and from it take that sacred food which Our good God has prepared for you. It will strengthen you; it will preserve you from sin; it will give you purity, charity, humility, and perseverance. By eating it, you will break down the force of evil habits, and acquire that strength which will enable you to form good ones. Can you doubt this? In that Holy Sacrament you receive into your heart Jesus Christ. The woman troubled with an issue of blood touched only the hem of His garment and she was instantaneously healed; the leper was touched by His all-holy hand, and was cleansed; the blind man had that same omnipotent hand laid upon his eyes, and he saw. Perhaps you also have been labouring for years under a spiritual malady; you may be covered with the leprous

¹ See *La Communion fréquente*, by Mgr. de Séjur.

garment of sin ; and worst of all, you may be stone blind to your wretched condition. Go to this tenderest of physicians, this most compassionate of fathers ; confess your sins ; be sorry for them ; then Jesus will give you His life's blood, His all-holy body. You will eat, you will drink, and through your veins there will course a new life, a new strength, which you must endeavour to preserve, to keep up, by frequently approaching to this source of life, of light, of strength, of purity, of perseverance.

VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

THE most sacred spot in every College, is the silent chapel where the holy sacrifice is offered, where the boys meet to pray, to prepare for the Sacraments, and to receive into their souls the floods of grace which inundate them from a worthy reception of those divinely instituted means of sanctity. Before the altar, like the star of Bethlehem, hangs the ever-burning lamp, which to each of us speaks the thrilling words of Martha to her sister Mary : "The Master is here and calleth for thee".¹ Behind the sacramental veils there is present the same Jesus that raised up their brother Lazarus from the dead ; there, are those hands which cleansed the leper, healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind ; there, are the feet which walked upon the troubled waters of the Galilean sea ; there, is the heart which has so loved the poor erring race of men, that He suffered it to be cleft in twain, and emptied of the last drop of its most precious blood.

But if Jesus is there, how is it that so few are present ? Surely, at the doors of one so rich and so benevolent, there should be crowds of poor, who stand in so much need of that which only He can give. Alas ! it is but too true that Jesus is present, and that His children neglect Him. Their love is lukewarm, their faith is nearly dead ! They will not spare even a few minutes every day to visit Him Who there remains so patiently awaiting their homage and their love. Those

¹ St. John xi. 28.

who live at a great distance from a church, have some excuse for rarely paying their Lord a visit ; but those who have the privilege of having the Blessed Sacrament abiding under their own roof have nothing to allege in self-defence, but their unpardonable apathy, carelessness, and indifference about their eternal welfare.

To help you to shake off a spirit so hateful to God and so detrimental to your best interests, let us examine into a few reasons which may induce you frequently to pay a visit to the Prisoner of the tabernacle.

We may, I think, take it for granted, and even you yourself will admit, that, as a rule, boys are not very strong in virtue. Also, that when they meet with difficulties in the pursuit of any object, they are inclined to throw up all idea of persevering in their efforts till their labour is crowned with success. In addition to this, that they, like their elders, have many troubles which come to ruffle the calm of their lives. They are destitute of many graces which are necessary to carry them safely through the dangers besetting their path in life. Now, if you are weak in virtue, is not Jesus the very source of strength? If you lose courage and give up your good intentions of battling bravely against opposing obstacles, is not He the very model of perseverance? If you are in a sea of sorrow, and are about to sink beneath its waves, is not He the comforter of those who mourn? If you need grace, is not He the source of it? Just consider these facts, one by one, and you will find in them a force which will frequently make you bend your knees before the lonely tabernacle in which Jesus sits awaiting your visit.

Jesus is there as truly, as really, as substantially as you yourself are here, either reading these pages, or listening to another reading them to you. This is our faith. To deny it would be to make shipwreck of that faith, to step from the narrow way which leads to God into the broad, smooth way which ends in destruction. Therefore, the strong living God is there present. Omnipotent is His name ; consequently nothing is impossible to Him. Those who go to Him, are endowed with His strength. Though of themselves they are

as weak as is a newly born infant, yet when they unite themselves with Him, and in consequence of that union partake of His strength, they become strong and courageous as lions from whom the devil will flee away in terror.

Do we not in every page of the Sacred Scripture see the truth of this? Look at the men whose lives and actions are there recorded for our edification. St. Peter was so weak, that at the word of a woman he denied his Lord. The rest of the Apostles fled away from Him through fear of the Jews. Nicodemus was in so great fear of what men would say of him, that though most powerfully attracted to the great Prophet, he dared not openly visit Him and listen to His doctrine. He came to Him secretly by night. But when Our Lord had imparted to them His own strength, see what a change was wrought in all these! St. Peter openly confessed Him before the great Council of his nation, and died rather than deny Him. The Apostles merited the martyr's crown rather than deny their belief in Him. Nicodemus lost all timidity, and afterwards openly professed the faith which Jesus came on earth to inspire into the hearts of men. They were enabled to do all things in Him Who strengthened them. So will it be with you. You are now, perhaps, experiencing the first fierce assaults of your fallen nature. You are weak. You fall perhaps often into the snares which the devil lays for you. You feel yourself powerless to resist, weak as a child when the fascination of temptation is held before your eyes. Go to the Strong One. He is awaiting you in the tabernacle. His arms are outstretched to receive you. You cannot daily receive Him, but you can daily and many times in each day visit Him. Go, therefore, to Him. Every time that you kneel before Him, there is flashed into your soul some of that force which is in the Omnipotent. It accumulates at each successive visit, till, like all those who keep close to their Lord, you will become invincible.

That which must make you painfully conscious of your weakness, and, therefore, most eager to acquire some of that strength of which you stand so much in need, is the inability to persevere in your efforts to conquer evil and to practise

virtue. Unfortunately in but too many cases, evil habits are acquired before the inexperienced boy is fully aware of their heinousness. When that knowledge does at last enter his mind, and he becomes aware of the turpitude and the deadly malice of sin, the evil has so firm a grip of him that his courage fails when he tries to shake it off. He struggles for a time, and then gives way. He rises again, and strides along the path of virtue with renewed courage ; but another strong temptation bursts like a storm upon him, and sweeps him away in its impetuous whirlwind. This rising and this falling, this building up and this casting down, dispirit, and demoralise him. He despairs of victory, and he who loses heart becomes an easy prey to his enemies.

Whence is he to revive his courage ? Where is he to find an example of patient perseverance ? He will rekindle the well-nigh extinct fire of his courage before the Blessed Sacrament, for, besides that force which it imparts, it gives to the fainting boy an example which he cannot fail to imitate. Jesus abides there. He is neglected ; but He does not depart. He is denied ; but He still remains with men. He is outraged ; but He patiently suffers. He is exposed to daily, to hourly insult ; yet nothing wearies His patience. All this tells insensibly on him who visits that Prisoner of love. Like the slow, persistent dropping of water upon a rock, it works its way, it makes an impression, it makes firm a will that is wavering, that is halting in its weakness between the enticing bait, and the hard rough fare of virtue. The force, which the soul receives from the Strong One, aided by His constraining example, at last triumphs, and the will, thus braced up, goes on steadily adhering to God, till evil habits are broken and their last fibres torn from the heart. Then the path of God's commandments is run with exceeding great sweetness of love.

This is not all. Besides moral ills, there are temporal misfortunes and sorrows which weigh down, depress, and take all life and buoyancy out of the heart, which extinguish its light, and drown its joy. Boys do not escape these ills. Though they are usually so gay and cheerful, there are

clouds which overshadow even the usually clear sky under which they ordinarily live. Very often there is at home some cause for secret sorrow. All is not well there. Sometimes it is the father that has taken to evil ways ; sometimes it is the mother that is not what she ought to be in a Christian family. A brother, perhaps, is wild and fills the hearts of his parents with bitterness and sorrow, which make them think that it would be better that he were lying in his grave. Straitened means or even grinding poverty at times fills with anxiety and depression the hearts of boys at School, when they think of the troubles and wants which press upon and worry the souls of those whom they love. If to these hidden springs of grief we add the daily recurring miseries of life ; the misunderstandings which arise ; the injustices under which they smart ; the petty persecutions to which they are exposed ; and the countless other little ills which come to swell the tide of sorrow beating upon their hearts, we must admit that the proverbially bright and happy schoolboy is not without his burden of woe. It bows him down ; it makes his heart ache ; it shuts out from him the sunshine of life. These are miseries which he must tell to some one, and yet they are too sacred to be whispered into the ear of even a friend. But there is one Friend to Whom they may be told. There is Jesus in the Holy Sacrament. To Him the boy may go, and kneeling in His presence, unburden his grief-oppressed heart. Jesus will listen ; His heart will be sympathetic ; He will speak unto him comforting words ; and the child will rise from his knees with the sorrow removed, the clouds swept away, the bright sunshine of calm resignation flooding his soul.

These are temporal advantages which, though excellent in themselves, yet are not the chief benefits to be received from visiting the Most Holy Sacrament. There are others which are primarily and principally to be looked for, and most certainly to be gained by this exercise of filial piety. As the Holy Eucharist is the very fountain of grace, you may draw from it the most copious draughts of that of which you stand in so pressing need. You need the grace of prayer, a grace which once obtained and well employed places in your

hands, at one and the same time, the key of God's treasure-house, and the sword which puts to flight the combined forces of hell. You need an abiding sorrow for past sin, a sorrow which like a running stream of limpid water, will cleanse and, at the same time, make fruitful in good works the soul into which it flows. You need purity, that bright, resplendent garment with which the soul of every boy ought to be adorned. You need charity, which is the guardian of purity, because both are so dear to the heart of Our Lord. You need a fixed, determined will to serve God with your whole heart.

Whence are you to obtain these graces, but from the Source of grace? If you go to the Blessed Sacrament, and persevere in your visits, you will adore, and worship, and make petitions to Him. He will speak to your heart, and you will speak to His. These acts will become habitual to you, you will perform them with as much ease as you either move or breathe. What else is this than the grace of prayer? Ask for this. Win it, and your salvation is secure. You have offended God. You desire to repent. Well, is not Jesus there before you, and does He not detest sin? Has He not wept over it? Has He not died to blot out its stains? Into the heart which asks for His spirit, He will pour it. He will fill it with His own blessed light, and that light will throw its beams upon the monster sin, and reveal its frightful nature to the soul, which will then turn away from it with horror, and weep bitter tears for having ever chosen it as a master instead of God.

God is infinite sanctity and purity. Nothing defiled can exist in the effulgent brightness of His sinlessness. Those who go to Him, and look into His face, and speak to Him as He sits there upon the altar throne, come back as Moses did from converse with the Lord—with some of the brightness of His countenance reflected in their souls. If you visit Him, this will happen to you also. Some of that spotless purity which shines resplendent in God will communicate itself to you. Your soul will be flooded with its glory, and the beauty of it will so entrance your heart that you will sigh and pray

and make efforts never to suffer its splendour to be dimmed by any stain of sin. God will listen to your prayer and clothe you in that vesture without which no one will ever be suffered to sit at the eternal banquet of God.

These graces will draw after them that characteristic mark of all who are the children of Jesus Christ—the charity of the Saviour will be poured into your heart. You will love God above all else, and you will love your neighbour for God's sake.

Lastly, God will so enamour you of His beloved Son, in Whose presence you delight to dwell, that He will impart to your will a fixedness of purpose which will make you steadily pursue the path of justice, and serve the great Master without swerving to the right hand or to the left.

These are only some of the benefits which you may look for from your visits to the Most Holy Sacrament. Therefore, if love of Our divine Redeemer does not take you frequently to the silent chapel where, as a king in his audience chamber, He waits for you, a sense of your own interest ought to draw you towards this treasure-house, whence you will go carrying with you those things of which you feel the most pressing need. Let not your amusements, nor your occupations ever stand in your way. Go thither if it is for only a few moments. Listen to what that dear Lord shall say to you. Speak to Him whatever your heart shall suggest. Confess to Him your sins. Pay to Him your homage as to your king. Study the virtues of His sacred heart. Flee to Him for refuge against the temptations and the seductions of the devil. You will leave His presence strengthened with a might which is not your own. You will be upheld by that strength, in your purpose to serve God, and to persevere steadfastly in His service. All your sorrows will be sweetened. Every grace of which you stand in need will be granted. You will be drawn more closely to God, and under the shadow of His wings you will work on steadily during the heat of the day, till the calm eventide when God shall come to reward His faithful children with all the riches and the happiness of His own eternal home.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

FAMILIARITY is said to breed contempt. If it does not lead us so far as this, it at least diminishes in us that high ideal which we perhaps had, before closer intimacy swept away the halo surrounding the persons and the things with which we were previously but slightly acquainted. We may safely say, then, that our familiarity with the "Lord's Prayer" is one of the reasons which causes us practically to have for it so little respect, that we usually hurry through it without either attention or devotion. Another reason is, very likely, that we have never taken the trouble to think about it, to search into its excellence, and to find out its power. Let us do this now, and the result will, no doubt, be that we shall highly esteem it, and endeavour to say it with our hearts as well as with our lips.

Among the various prayers which we either hear during the public services of the Church, or read in our liturgical books, there are many which have for their authors learned theologians, saintly men, and devout ascetics. But of all these prayers there is only one that has God Himself for its author. For, when Our Lord delivered His Sermon on the Mount, He reprobated the long and wordy prayers of the heathen, and cautioned His hearers against the false notion that they would be all the more readily heard, because of the multiplicity of the words in which their petitions were addressed to God. He then taught them a brief formula of prayer which, from the words with which it begins, is called the "Our Father". On another occasion, when asked by one of His disciples to teach both him and those who were with him how to pray, He once again repeated the "Our Father" with which we are all so familiar. Hence, Jesus Christ, as we know so well, without however feelingly appreciating our knowledge, is the author of that formula, through which we so often and so thoughtlessly hurry. But Jesus Christ is God Incarnate, and, therefore, God Himself is the author of the "Our Father".

This being the case, it will follow as a natural consequence, that this prayer must contain all that God wishes us to ask.

Also, it points out to us the order in which these blessings ought to be sought. Lastly, it furnishes us with a model on which to frame all our petitions to Him. Consequently, this is of all other prayers the most excellent.

It is most excellent, because it contains all that God wishes us to ask. What does God wish us to ask? He desires us to ask for all that will lead us to a heavenly life, and for all that will so help us to lead our earthly life as to make it a fitting preparation for the life that is to come. In what order does He will these blessings to stand? He wills us to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice—that is to say—real and true good, and then to be preserved from real evil. Real and true good is, first, the glory of God. In the next place, it is good that has reference to ourselves. In this good there are three grades : (1) heavenly good, which is God's kingdom ; (2) spiritual good, which is the accomplishment of His holy will ; (3) temporal good, which is all that sustains us in our present life.

He wishes us not only to ask for real good, but to be preserved from real evil. Real evil, as all wise men admit, is sin, which is directly opposed to heavenly good ; temptations, which are opposed to spiritual good ; and adversities, which are opposed to temporal good. Thus, in the "Our Father," God has pointed out to us all the good for which we should ask, and the order in which that good should be asked for. St. Augustine, after noticing these excellences of this divine prayer tells us, that all other prayers will be acceptable to God, only when they are made to resemble this prayer, both in the quality of the requests which they proffer, and in the order in which they proffer them. For, if our prayers ask for favours which are not in accord with the petitions of the "Lord's Prayer," they are unworthy of a Christian, and, therefore, they cannot be acceptable to God. If, however, they are in accord with its petitions, but not with the order that is willed by God—that is to say—if greater prominence is given, and a more vehement desire is expressed for merely temporal good than for that which is eternal, or if our advantage is set before God's glory, that inversion will detract from the worth of our

prayer. Hence, if we desire that our prayer should be heard, the preference must be given to the more important objects. God's honour must take precedence of our convenience ; the securing of our last end must rank far above any earthly good ; temporal advantages must yield to those that are eternal ; and thus our requests will be made to harmonise with those that are made in the "Lord's Prayer".

To these considerations which cannot fail to fill your hearts with veneration for this prayer, we may add this other, that it is most efficacious for obtaining everything of which you stand in need. For, its petitions to the Father of mercies were drawn up by His well-loved Son. None other so well knows the mind of God. None other is so well acquainted with the necessities which press upon us, or with the nature of the gifts which God is most willing to bestow. He is the Master of prayer. He became man, to be our mediator with the Father and to plead for us. Therefore, when we make use of His supplications, we are sure to be favourably heard, for we are addressing to God the very words of His beloved Son ; we are asking for that which He wishes to grant ; we are asking for it in that very order in which He wills us to regard both the things that are good and the things that are evil. In one word, we are pleading with Our heavenly Father, for the alleviation of our miseries, and we are asking Him in the words and in the name of His own beloved Son, to assuage their pain. What says Jesus Christ Himself about any prayer made with these conditions?—"Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, that He will do".¹

The Fathers of the Church, who have written upon and explained the various petitions of this wonderful prayer, attribute to it another kind of efficacy, which is that of blotting out the numberless small faults and venial sins of which we are guilty during the course of the day. This cleansing power is attached to it only when it is said with attention and devotion. For it is only on these occasions that it softens the heart, and elicits from it sentiments that call down the grace of God.

¹ St. John xiv. 13.

It is for this reason that St. Benedict orders the presiding Superior to say it aloud, at the end of Lauds and of Vespers : " In order that the brethren being reminded by the agreement or covenant of this prayer, in which they say : ' Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,' may purge themselves of their faults ".¹ Thus, you see, that if recited with due dispositions—with faith and confidence—it procures for the just an increase of grace, and for sinners that softening of the heart which disposes it to true contrition and conversion. In what esteem, then, ought you to hold this prayer ! With what attention ought you to recite it ! With what tender devotion ought you to repeat it over and over again, never wearying of its sweetness ! Other prayers are, no doubt, good, but this is by excellence the Christian's prayer. Even one of its petitions will serve for a whole life-time, as we see in the case of Gregory Lopez, whose contemplative prayer for years consisted of nothing more than the words : " Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ".

The first object, then, to be aimed at by each of us, is devoutly to recite this divine prayer, in consequence of our knowledge of its excellence. For it is Christ's own prayer ; it contains petitions for all that God wills to give us ; it points out to us the order in which we are to seek for His gifts. Why, then, does it fail to work for us the marvels which God intended it to work ? Because through our familiarity with it, we but too often repeat it in a mechanical sort of way, through routine, without attending to what we say, or to that which we ask.

In addition to this, we do not, perhaps, really wish to obtain that for which our lips are asking. We call God " Father," and we treat Him as if He were our bitterest enemy. We pray that His name may be honoured, and by our wicked lives we cover Him with dishonour. We ask Him to be King in our hearts and in the hearts of our fellow-men, and, while so doing, we are in a state of rebellion against His laws, and of open warfare with our neighbours. We beseech

¹ *Regula.*, cap. xiii.

Him to cause His will to be done. But how do we strive to accomplish it? Though we know it to be most wise, most in accord with right reason, best for our interests both temporal and eternal, yet we rebel against it and in every way strive to thwart it. We do not wish it to be accomplished in our regard, and we do not do anything to carry it into effect. We beg for our daily sustenance, saying, "Give us this day our daily bread"—a petition which means that we ask not for more of this world's good things than is necessary for us. Yet we struggle to have more than we require, more than is good for us, in fact to have so much that we make the acquisition of it the end of our existence. We make of this worldly wealth our god, and in the abundance of these good things we forget that we have not here a lasting city, that we are only pilgrims, travellers, who ought to be satisfied with a sufficiency for the brief day of life.

We beseech God to forgive us our sins, and to forgive us in the same proportion as we forgive others. How do we then treat those "who have trespassed against us"? We are hard and inexorable towards them; we wish them to be punished; we do not relent until they have paid us the last farthing. How can we, after such conduct, expect God to pardon us our transgressions? We humbly ask Him not to lead us into temptation. But what do we ourselves do? We wilfully expose ourselves to the occasions of sin; we thrust ourselves into danger, and then we are astonished that He does not rescue us from the snares into which we have wittingly put our feet. We crave to be delivered from evil both spiritual and temporal. With what reason can we expect that He will hear this prayer, when our hearts are not turned away from real evil, and when that which to us appears to be evil, is evil only from our point of view?

All this must be changed, if we wish God to pay any attention to our prayer. First, we must be full of well-grounded confidence in Him, of confidence which will with truth entitle us to address Him as Father, because we have behaved towards Him as dutiful children, who by their love and obedience deserve from Him a return of love. We must

from our hearts be able to say, "Hallowed be Thy name," because by our holy lives we are doing our utmost to make it honoured. In sorrows, in tribulations, in trials, we must say: "Thy will be done". If poverty straitens us, we must with resignation say that we shall be content with our daily bread. When injured, crossed, and ill-treated by others, we must with generosity say: "Forgive us, as we freely forgive them". When we ask not to be led into temptation, we must protest before God that we ourselves have not sought it out and wilfully gone into it. Thus we shall be able with confidence to recite our "Pater Noster," and we may with a certainty of being heard, hope to receive from Our most indulgent Father, all that is requisite for our spiritual life, and all that is necessary for our temporal wants.

"OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN."

IT is with these words that Our Lord prefaches the seven petitions of which His prayer is composed. By so doing, He emboldens us to call God "Our Father," a title which no one would have dared to employ, had not so great an authority commanded him to make use of it. The Church herself seems to be of this mind, for during the Mass, she introduces this divine prayer by the words: "Being instructed by Thy saving precepts, and following Thy divine directions, we presume to say, Our Father!" Let us, then, see what instruction we may draw from these words, for the more deeply we penetrate into their wealth of meaning, the more devoutly shall we be able to repeat them.

Any one who urges another to present a petition for some favour, is careful to impress upon him a high idea of the gentleness, the goodness, and the liberality of him from whom he is about to ask this boon. It is with the same intention that Our Lord puts into our mouths these few but pregnant words. He employs the tenderest, the most loving title that we know, a title that breathes naught but sweetness and the deepest affection. In order to inspire us with confidence and with an assured hope of obtaining what we ask, He uses the word

“Father”. Of that Father He had already oftentimes spoken to those who now listened to Him, telling them that He saw their secret thoughts, heard their secret sighs, and knew their many and most pressing necessities. Now a father, as every one is aware, knows, loves, and is willing to help his son. Therefore, by putting this title into our mouths when we kneel to pray, Christ Our Lord wishes to point out to us God’s desire to fill us with good things, and to help us in all our necessities, that knowing this, we may confidently hope to obtain whatever we ask—a condition without which no one receives anything from God—for distrust of Him, or doubt about His willingness to help, at once locks up His treasure house, and on those who entertain sentiments concerning Him so derogatory to His nature, there is no outpouring of divine bounty. Therefore, Christ teaches us to call God “Our Father”.

But is God really and truly “Our Father”? Yes, God is Our Father; for He created us. Our body is the work of His hands; our soul is called by Him into existence and dowered with its wonderful faculties. He has, in our regard, another claim to this title, because our preservation is a kind of extended creation. For, without His support and concurrence, we could not continue to be. Moreover, the very food that sustains our natural life, is ministered to us by His provident care. In this sense also, God is Our Father. But as Christians we have yet another reason, more powerful still, for calling Him Father. For, by the Sacrament of Baptism, He regenerates us, and adopts us into His family. A privilege so great, caused the Apostle St. John to exclaim: “Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God!”¹ We are not, of course, sons in the same sense that Jesus Christ is a son; for He is God, and the Son of God by nature, whereas we are His sons only by grace and by adoption, of which sonship St. Paul says: “You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, by which we cry, Abba, Father”.²

¹ 1 St. John iii. 1.

² Rom. viii. 15.

Now, as adopted children become the brothers of the children of those who adopt them, so do we, by Baptism, become the brothers of Jesus Christ. Again, as those who are adopted acquire the rights of their brothers, inheriting equally with them the property bequeathed by their parents, so do we enter upon the rights of inheritance possessed by Our Lord. It is thus that St. Paul argues in his Epistle to the Romans : “ If (we are) sons, (we are) heirs also ; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ”.¹ Therefore, being children of God, both by creation—as being fashioned by Him—and by grace, we ought to say, with tenfold affection and with the deepest love of our hearts, “ Our Father ”.

What, then, must we think of those who by their grievous sins have revolted from God, and abandoned His house ? Can they with truth address Him as “ Father ” ? Yes ; for in a sense He is still their Father, inasmuch as being their Creator they are indebted to Him for the breath of life. But with respect to the life of grace which carries with it a right to the glorious inheritance of heaven, they can in no wise address Him by that fond title. If they persevere in their revolt, they will altogether cease to be God’s children. Hence, when speaking of those who withheld Him, and endeavoured to keep others from following Him, Our Lord could truly say : “ You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do ”.² Nevertheless, there is a sense in which even the sinner can never lose his character as child of God, that is to say, when we look at him as being the creature of God. God created him, and that fact becomes for him the ground upon which he may always address God as his Father. The moment he wishes to abandon his evil courses and to resume his right to the glorious inheritance which he has flung away, he may at once call God his Father. “ Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee,” said the returning Prodigal, and in the self-same spirit the repenting sinner may address God, and by his tears of sorrow, win back his title to the sonship of God.

¹ Rom. viii. 17.

² St. John viii. 44.

By ordering us to call God "Father," Our Lord willed not only to fill our hearts with confidence and love, but to recall to our minds the duties incumbent upon us in consequence of our position as His children. The first of these is love. In the case of God, Our Lord Himself has told us, that we need not pay to Our heavenly Father that debt of *sensitive* love which we are able naturally to give to our parents ; for this kind of love is not always at our command. All that He requires is our rational love, the true test of which is a faithful obedience to the divine law : "If any one love Me, he will keep My word".¹ So that by putting into our mouths the word "Father," He intimates that our first duty to Him is love, love proved not by words but by deeds.

The second duty implied by our use of the word Father when addressing God, is profound reverence which finds its outward expression not only in that veneration which we manifest towards Him while we are engaged in the public worship of the Church, but in the consciousness which we display of His ubiquitous presence, the constant recollection of which restrains us in all the actions both of our private and of our public life.

The third duty which it calls upon us to perform, is obedience. For, if God is Our Father, He has a right to this compliance with His all-holy will. His precepts make manifest to us that will in all the relations of life, and the word Father reminds us, that we must without hesitation carry it into execution. If we refuse to do so ; if we set at naught His wishes ; if we trample upon His commands, He may with justice in the words of the Prophet bitterly reproach us and say : "If I be a father where is My honour ? and if I be a master where is My fear ? saith the Lord of Hosts !" ²

Consequently, the use of this word "Father" in the opening of the Lord's Prayer, is to us a reminder both of our duties to God and of the position which we hold in His regard. That position is one of the greatest dignity ; and because of its surpassing dignity, it imperatively requires of

¹ St. John xiv. 23.

² Malach. i. 6.

us that we should never be guilty of anything that would stain it with dishonour. Being sons of the King of kings, we must never descend to baseness, never be guilty of an act in any way unbecoming the glorious source to which we trace our origin.

Before we conclude, we may be permitted to point out to you, or rather to recall to your mind, the fact that Christ bids us say *Our* and not *My* Father, in order to let us know that He is the common Father of all ; a Father with Whom there is no distinction of persons ; to Whom, consequently, all are dear. By intimating this to us, He wishes us to bear in mind that every sentiment of envy, jealousy, pride and rancour ought to be banished from the hearts of those whose common Father loves them with a tenderness so great, so far-reaching, so endearing. Moreover this word "*our*," impresses upon us the duty of praying for and of aiding one another. Hence, throughout the whole prayer, this duty is emphasised by the fact that we are made to say : "give *us*, forgive *us*, lead *us* not". By thus sharing with others that which we beseech God to give to us, we lose nothing ; for, God Our Father being Almighty, can as easily hear the petitions of a hundred millions, as He can hear the whispered prayer of a single person. Besides, as He is the God of charity, nothing will more forcibly move Him to be bountiful than the prayer of one whose heart is animated by His own divine spirit of charity.

Lastly, take notice of the words which immediately follow the tender name "Father"—"Our Father, *Who art in heaven*". Why does Jesus Christ, Who knew so well the immensity and the ubiquity of God, assign to Him a particular place, as if He could be confined and limited to any special locality? He points out to us heaven as the abode of God, because it is the noblest, the most magnificent part of the universe, as the place in which He manifests to His Angels and His Saints the glory, the wealth, and the majesty of the Godhead. Jesus tells us that God dwells there, in order to impart to us some idea of His sublimity ; for, when we look at the firmament, and see the great vault strewn with brilliant stars, we are forced to confess that we are mere worms of the earth, mere

dust atoms compared with Our Father Whose will brought all this immense creation into existence. Finally, Jesus tells us that Our Father is in heaven, in order to give us clearly to understand that there also is our abiding home. For, we have not here a lasting city, but only a tent set up, as it were, for a night, and then folded and carried away. Therefore, to that home of Our Father must our hearts and our affections be directed. There, is Our Father for Whom these hearts must burn, and upon Whom these affections must be for ever fastened. There, are our brethren for whose companionship we should incessantly sigh. There, is our unfading, our glorious inheritance, into the possession of which we ought to long to enter with an ardour so great, that it will dissolve our earthly tabernacle, and set us free from the body of this death.

“ HALLOWED BE THY NAME.”

IN the Lord’s Prayer, the first petition that we address to God, is one which craves for the “hallowing” or sanctifying of His ever blessed name. Let us try by attentive study to grasp the full meaning of these few simple words. We shall perhaps find in them a great deal more than we imagined them to contain.

That which we ask to be hallowed or sanctified, is not the simple word “God”. Our petition means a great deal more than that. By the “name” of God, we mean God Himself. By it we designate His being, His greatness, His almighty power, His infinite goodness, all His attributes, in one word the sum total of all His perfections. Hence, whenever the Sacred Scripture tells us that God’s name is terrible, when it bids us call upon that holy name, and exhorts us to put our trust in it, because it is our glory, our only hope, our chief good, it wishes us to understand that God Himself is to be feared, adored, and addressed in words of supplication, for only He is able to satisfy all our desires. We may assume, then, that the “name” of God embraces in itself all that is good and perfect; that it represents the justice, the goodness, the sanctity, the power and the greatness of God; consequently,

that in asking that it should be hallowed, we are praying that God may be sanctified.

Now, "to sanctify," means to make holy ; therefore in this sense the word cannot be referred to God Who is holiness itself. But besides meaning "to make holy," it also signifies to recognise any person or any thing as holy, and in consequence of that recognition, to treat that person or that thing with respect and love. It is in this second sense that we use the word in our prayer when we petition God to sanctify or hallow His holy name or nature, as we have just explained. Our prayer, then, means that we implore Him, by His almighty power, to make all men pay to Him that honour and worship which are His due. How few among them comply with this their most imperative duty ! Cast your eyes upon the millions of men that people this planet, and consider how many of them are enveloped in the darkness of paganism. Turning your gaze upon the civilised nations, reflect upon the rents that have been made in the seamless garment of Christ's Church, by the countless bodies of heretics who have cast off its yoke, and chosen to walk according to a gospel invented by themselves. Even among the children of the true Church, how many are there who have practically put themselves beyond its pale, by leading lives of sin, by abstaining from the Sacraments, by withdrawing themselves from public worship, and by making their whole conduct resemble, as closely as possible, the conduct of unbelievers.

By saying "Hallowed be Thy name," we embrace, then, in the circle of our desire, all these ; we beseech God to make Himself known to them ; to cause Himself to be respected by them ; to fill their hearts with love for His divine nature, that being known and loved, He may be adored and served by all the hearts that His hands have fashioned ; and, that as the Angels and the Saints bless and praise Him in the courts of heaven, so all men may be united in the knowledge, love, and worship of Him upon earth. Therefore, the object of this petition is the glory of God, but, as theologians are careful to point out, not His *essential* glory which He possesses independently of all created beings, but only what is

called His *accidental* or external glory which comes to Him from His creatures.

This petition affects us who offer it, and brings upon us the grace of God. For, by praying that God may be sanctified by His creatures, we in reality pray for all that by which we are able to give to Him this external glory. Therefore, by it we ask for strength to flee away from the evil of sin which so fascinates us ; for grace to accomplish the divine precepts, in which we find so many and so apparently insuperable difficulties ; for help to live up to the Gospel-standard of goodness ; for faith, hope, and charity, that we may be able to offer up a worship worthy of God, and bind ourselves to Him by the sweet ties of holy religion.

It affects also all who are not living as God wishes them to live, and even those who are serving Him with their whole hearts. For, it prays that those who know not God, may obtain the light of faith ; that those who are separated from the Church, may return to her bosom ; that those who are wallowing in the mire of sin, may repent ; and that those who are just and holy, may rise still higher in the scale of justice and holiness, and thus may give to God a greater degree of accidental glory.

With what fervour ought we, day by day, to send up this petition before the throne of Our heavenly Father ! If it could be only fully accomplished, sin would disappear from the world, virtues would flourish in every heart, and earth would become the ante-chamber of the eternal kingdom. For, all the evil existing among men, comes from the fact that the knowledge of God has, to all intents and purposes, disappeared from their midst. Therefore, let but the light of that knowledge again shine bright and clear in their hearts, and God will be respected, served, and loved, as He deserves to be loved.

You will, doubtless, have noticed that the petition for the hallowing of God's name, is addressed to Him and not to our fellow-men, as a kind of earnest exhortation to them to accomplish this their first, their most important duty. The reason is because our appeal to men would be in vain, unless

God first bestowed on them the moving and strengthening power of His divine grace. For, the merely natural powers of man are not, of themselves, able to give unto God that worship and that honour which are His due. Consequently, we have recourse to God, and by so doing we admit that we are unable, without His divine aid, to accomplish any supernatural good. As a matter of fact, however, all help from God presupposes our co-operation with Him, according to that well-known proverb, so full of sound, practical common-sense: “God helps those who first help themselves,” that is to say, who are ready to co-operate with His moving grace.

This naturally leads us to ask in what way we can co-operate with God in the hallowing or sanctification of His name. We can do this, by stirring up within our own hearts, a high idea of the greatness and the majesty of that God Whom we are privileged to call Father. This idea will cause us to prostrate ourselves before Him with profound sentiments of adoring love, and will fire our hearts with the burning desire to have all our fellow-men join us in this act of homage. When we reflect upon their coldness and indifference, these will fill us with sorrow for our own misdeeds in the past, and with zeal to do our utmost, by way of reparation, to make Him known and loved, at least as well as we ourselves know and love Him. Zeal such as this never remains inactive; it bursts forth and manifests itself by deeds. Hence it is that those who ardently desire the glory of God, first of all, in their own persons, offer up the sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving, and, in the next place, most carefully shun the doing of anything that would dishonour Him. Hence their great care to avoid sin and to keep every jot and tittle of the divine law.

Not satisfied with this, they then devote their zeal to others. They endeavour to inspire them with the same sentiments for God as are those with which their own hearts are animated. No toil, no trouble is esteemed by them too great, if only these labours, on their part, will prevent others from transgressing the law of God. They push them on to do good; if they are ignorant, they instruct them; if

they are in doubt, they counsel them ; if they sin, with loving prudence they correct them ; when they manifest weakness and waver in their good resolutions, they try to strengthen and uphold them in these good resolves. Above all things this zeal makes them careful to set before the eyes of those whom they are leading to glorify God, the shining light of their own good example, which is more powerful to draw others to God than the most eloquent discourse, the most touching appeal. Thus they carry into effect that wise counsel of Our Lord's: " So to let their light shine before men, that these may see their good works, and may glorify their Father Who is in heaven ".

If all these efforts prove unavailing, then they have recourse to silent prayer, not that in their active efforts they neglect this powerful aid, but only that they redouble the fervour and the frequency of their prayer. Hence it is that those who wish their heavenly Father's name to be glorified by men, are earnest in their petitions for the conversion of sinners, for the removal of the many evils which afflict the Church, and hamper her in her labours for the well-being of men. They weep over the decay of morals ; they are grievously afflicted at the outbreak of scandals ; they bemoan the want of faith and piety among the people of God. Think you that God is deaf to the prayers which ascend from hearts actuated by such sentiments as these ? No ; not one of them falls to the ground. There may, of course, be no visible fruit, no glamour of success to crown and to reward them ; but when the great husbandman shall have gathered in His harvest, then also will be seen the rich sheaves which have been bound together by these zealous and most earnest workers.

From the little that we have said, you will now be able to see all that is contained in that petition, which Jesus puts into our mouths for the furtherance of His Father's glory. Therefore, in future, whenever you say, " Hallowed be Thy name," try to be animated by that spirit of zeal which breathes in these words. If that spirit take possession of your heart, you yourself will first try to know, to love, and to serve God.

It will fill you with a horror of sin. It will make you set before yourself the glory of God, as the end for which He created you. Consequently, in all that you do, this will be your chief aim. You will not seek self ; you will not seek your own glory. You will be content with the utility, the advantage flowing from your work,—but the glory accruing to you from its performance, you will offer to God. Your motto through life will be : “Let the labour, the trouble, the anxiety inseparable from that work be mine ; but Thine, O my Father ! my God ! be the glory both from me and from my fellow-men ”.

“THY KINGDOM COME.”

AFTER petitioning God to help us rightly to glorify His holy name, which represents to us all that God is, our next petition is for something that is an essential part of our own happiness. We ask that God’s kingdom may come, that is to say, may be established. Let us try to penetrate into the meaning of this request, for the knowledge with which it will enrich us, will enable us to send it up before Our Father’s throne, from hearts burning with an ardent desire to be made partakers of that kingdom.

God, as we know, is the Sovereign Lord and Master of the universe. He is King of heaven ; He is King also of earth. But on this earth, though King of all that it contains, He is yet King in such a way as to leave His rational subjects perfectly free. This freedom He gives to them, in order that their choice of Him as King may be meritorious, and procure for them admission into the glorious kingdom over which He reigns in heaven. Now, though men are free to choose or to reject Him, they are not so free that they may make themselves independent of Him. Independence in this sense is impossible ; for, it would imply that God could suffer anything else than Himself to be the last end of His creatures. Not being independent of God, they are responsible to Him for the use which they make of their liberty. If they abuse it, and, if they do not then repent of their abuse, they will be

for ever excluded from the kingdom destined for them, and punished for their rebellion against God.

Therefore, in order to guide them in their choice, He has set up in this world a kingdom of His own, which though in the world, is not of the world, as He Himself has most emphatically told us. To found that kingdom, God sent His own Son Who became incarnate, and as man walked about among men and taught them. He gathered around Him a body of men whom He instructed and trained, that they might be the teaching body in His kingdom. Over these chosen men, twelve in number, He appointed a leader or chief. To him He gave the special mission or office of instructing, guiding, and ruling the rest. He made him the corner-stone founded upon Himself. For him He, in a special manner prayed, that his faith should not fail, and commissioned him to confirm his brethren. He promised that the kingdom or Church thus founded upon him, should never fail; that the gates of hell should not prevail against it; that the Spirit of truth should abide with it, teaching it all truth; and that He Himself should be with it till the end of time. Thus did He establish that teaching body which should gather all nations unto itself, and form them into a spiritual kingdom, not of this world. That spiritual kingdom is the Catholic Church, in which the Pope or Chief Pastor, as successor of St. Peter, has inherited his rights and privileges. It is a kingdom visible to the whole world, ever proclaiming its divine origin, ever exercising its mission, ever claiming to have all that Christ promised.

Therefore, when we ask God "that His kingdom may come," one of the meanings of our petition is, that the Church may be by all acknowledged as this guide set up in the world to enable men to make a right choice, and to support them in that choice, by all the spiritual helps stored up in her garners. For, though the Church is Christ's kingdom in this world, it is, as Christ Himself was, the object against which the devil and the unregenerate hearts of men range themselves in deadly hostility. They cast off its authority, and they will not suffer it to reign over them, just as they cast off Christ, and chose in His stead a robber and murderer.

Our prayer, then, to God when we say "Thy kingdom come," is that the Church may extend itself and lay hold of men's hearts, drawing them by the cords of Adam, even unto the kingdom of God. It is a petition unto Our good Father to pour the light of His divine wisdom into their hearts, that they may see the Church's claims to their obedience, and to soften their obdurate wills, that they may submit their necks to her yoke, and thus be brought within the reach of those aids by which eventually they will obtain possession of the eternal kingdom. This is the first meaning of the words: "Thy kingdom come".

But besides this kingdom of God which is not of this world, though actually in it, and exercising upon it an influence so widespread and so far reaching, there is also in the world another kingdom in the hearts of men, the kingdom of God's grace. By means of that grace, God dwells in the heart, and becomes its King. He is the principle or source of its thoughts ; its affections take their rise from, and they are regulated by Him ; its actions are governed by Him, so that He is for it the beginning and the end of all things. For the individual man, the consequence of this is, that he is submissive to God, he is ready to carry out His will, and when that will is made known to him by interior inspirations, or by the guidance of obedience, he executes it with promptitude and love. His whole soul is, as it were, animated by God, and all its faculties are consecrated to His service. This is the kingdom of God in the individual soul.

By saying "Thy kingdom come," we pray that this kingdom may be established not only in our own individual soul, but in the souls of all other men, because this is necessary as an indispensable means for securing the possession of another kingdom, the kingdom of God's glory. Also, because this kingdom of grace is the greatest happiness that we can enjoy during our mortal pilgrimage. For, if the spirit of God rules us, in other words, if God is master of our hearts, we are by that very fact in the right and just order which God has appointed for securing this happiness. Consequently, we are in repose, we are at peace, we are content.

But the soul in which God does not rule, is not in that right and just order devised by God. Not being under His dominion, it must necessarily fall under the dominion of the devil, who reigns in it by sin. It is, therefore, subject to the storms of unbridled passion, and full of unruly desires which can never be satisfied ; consequently, like a sea lashed into fury by the strife of contrary winds, it is never at rest.

Therefore, if we desire to enjoy even earthly happiness, we must needs pray for the coming of God's kingdom. Sinners must lift up their voices and ask for it, in order that they may be freed from the tyranny of the devil, while the just must pray for it, because though actually tasting of its sweets, they must ever bear in mind that the devil is still abroad seeking whom he may devour, and that their passions, though subdued and in chains, are not dead. In answer to this prayer, God will keep these passions in subjection, and thus will preserve His children from every stain of sin.

Prayer, however, will not of itself bring about this happy result ; for, something more is requisite. We must co-operate with the grace of God, obtained by prayer ; for, as we are never tired of telling you, God helps those who help themselves. It would be nothing short of mocking God if we were to ask Him to come and reign in our hearts, and if we then did nothing to make that reign possible. Therefore, efforts must be made on our part to introduce God into our hearts. Suppose that pride has there taken up its abode, or vainglory, or self-seeking, or the unclean devil, how can God accept our invitation ? Therefore, something must be done to make it possible for Him to enter. Cast out these usurpers, by endeavouring to be humble, pure, and unselfish. Then you will be co-operating with the grace of God ; you will be helping yourself ; and God will help you. He will establish His kingdom in the heart whence His enemies have been ejected. Therefore, the Kingship of God over our hearts is the second meaning of the petition : " Thy kingdom come".

This kingdom in the hearts of men is, however, only preparatory for the kingdom of God's glory, which being the end for which He created us, must be most ardently desired and

sought for by us. It will be the prize awarded to him who at his death shall be free from all stain, and who shall have discharged the debt of temporal punishment due to his sins. Therefore, the chief end of our petition is, that the eternal kingdom of God may be ours, and that God may make us worthy to enter into the possession of it. The accomplishment of this end is for the glory of God ; for then the power of the devil will be destroyed, and only God will reign supreme King, Lord, and Master of all hearts. Also, it is for our own personal good, for it is a petition for the possession of the very object for which God created us. The body will be satiated with chaste delights, the soul with eternal truth, and with the gratification of all its desires. It will reign with God, and with Him will be happy for ever.

But as this kingdom can be ours only when death has struck from our limbs the chains of mortality, the words "Thy kingdom come" express an ardent desire for our speedy dissolution. Men, writhing under the scorn, the injustice, and the many other misfortunes incidental to our present state, in their impatience often call upon death to come and set them free from these miseries ; but that wish springs from a want of resignation to God's holy will, and it is consequently sinful. But the desire of death implicitly contained in this petition, is one that is in conformity with the will of God, that submits to all these ills, that does not flee from them, but that like Christ bravely endures them, desiring the advent of death, not in order to be free from pain and sorrow, but to enter into possession of God's kingdom. This desire is meritorious ; and, therefore, we should pray for death. To fear it ; to be grieved at its approach ; to fight against it, shows but a feeble desire for the kingdom of God. For not having that desire, who knows but that the poor soul may be for a lengthened period an exile from its true home ! If, however, we are full of the fear of death, chiefly because of the uncertainty of our lot after death, this dread is not an imperfection. Nay, instead of being an imperfection, it may become for us the occasion of advancing in virtue, by keeping us away from sin, by increasing our fervour, by deepening our contrition,

and by causing us frequently to elicit many acts of the love of God.

You are now in possession of the meaning of this petition of the Lord's Prayer. By it you ask that God's Church diffused throughout the world may be acknowledged, loved, and loyally obeyed by all men. You ask that divine grace may be abundantly poured into all hearts, in order that it may establish in them God's eternal kingdom. You ask that His heavenly kingdom may be awarded to all. You ask that death may come to free you from the trammels of the flesh, and throw wide open to you the gates of your eternal home. Is the life which you at present lead in harmony with the spirit of this petition? Are you a true child of the Church, loving, respecting and obeying her mandates? Do you faithfully correspond with the grace poured by God into your soul? Do you desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ? If your life is not in harmony with the spirit of this petition, try to make it accord with those words: "Thy kingdom come". Do not suffer the devil to be king of your heart. In order to avert so frightful a calamity, never permit any disorderly passion to effect a lodgment in that sanctuary. Pray earnestly that God may be its master and governor. Do your utmost to put Him in possession of it. He will second your efforts. He will enable you always to repulse the attempts of His enemy to gain a footing in the kingdom of your heart, and He Himself will be its Lord, its Master, its King.

"THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."

OUR Lord tells us that He came on earth, not to do His own will, but the will of His Father Who is in heaven. Also, that only those who in this respect copy His example, shall enter the eternal kingdom: "He that doth the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven".¹ It is for this reason that in the Lord's Prayer He makes us

¹ St. Matt. vii. 21.

petition God, that His will may be accomplished here on earth in the same way that it is done in heaven : " Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ". Let us, then, try to understand what it is that we ask for.

Theologians tell us that, although the will of God is essentially one, yet there are some things which it accomplishes, in spite of all opposition on our part, and others which it effects only on condition of our compliance with it. We may, therefore, consider it under this twofold aspect. By the first, which we may call His absolute will, He determines all that happens in the world. This will is always carried out, and no one can resist it. But besides these things, there are many others which God wills only in dependence on our will, that is to say, with our free consent. This we may call His conditional will or will of desire. He makes it known to us by commands, by prohibitions, by inspirations, by the voice of the Church and of Superiors, all which are unto us so many signs or indications of His holy will. It is evident that this will is not always accomplished ; for we have freedom which God has given to us to be a source of merit, and, consequently, we are at liberty to do this will or not to do it, just as it shall seem good to us. If we carry it into effect, there is merit which God will afterwards crown with an eternal reward ; if we refuse to do it, there is in certain cases deadly sin, for which we shall be punished unless we blot out our guilt by repentant sorrow.

God wishes us to accomplish both these wills ; the first, by humbly bowing our heads to and accepting it ; the second, by diligently carrying it into effect. We pray for grace and strength to do both, when we say : " Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ".

By what we term His absolute will, God disposes of us just as it pleases Him. Some men He establishes in the lofty stations of life. He endows them with great bodily strength, with robust health, having seemingly set at their doors a guard to ward off whatever might disturb their temporal well-being. Wealth flows, as it were, spontaneously into their hands. Men honour and respect them, laying at their feet the world's

obsequious homage, and removing from their path every obstacle that might cause them annoyance.

On the other hand, He seems to single out others as the butt against which adversity shoots her arrows, and never fails to hit the mark. They are born in a lowly state, with poverty as their only inheritance. Adversity chooses them for her own, bodily disease fastens upon them, and never relaxes its hold. As a matter of fact, life is for them one long succession of ills which beat upon them like the pitiless pelting of a wintry storm. Whatever their hand touches fails and withers. Patrons abandon them; friends desert them; their plans are frustrated; their undertakings come to naught; not one ray of sunshine finds its way into their darkened lives. All this is the will of God, Who, for wise reasons into which we may not at present penetrate, has so disposed matters.

Against that will it is useless to make any resistance, for God will carry it into effect. But though this is the will of the Most High, He does not forbid us to make efforts to escape from it. We are quite within our rights in doing everything in our power to win for ourselves wealth, and health, and worldly happiness. Nevertheless, if in spite of all our efforts we are unable to extricate ourselves from the meshes of misfortune in which we find ourselves entangled, all that remains for us to do is to bow our heads and submit to the inevitable. This is a hard fate; yet God requires us to accept it. However, hard as it undoubtedly is, it is harder still patiently to endure the ills that do not come to us directly from God. Of this nature are all those misfortunes that spring from the malice of our fellow-men. These may, perhaps, speak falsely of us; or attribute to us evil motives; or lay to our charge meannesses that we loathe and detest with our whole heart. Not satisfied with this, they plot against our temporal well-being; or cause others to distrust us; or frustrate our designs; or destroy our credit; or withdraw our friends.

Can these things, you will ask, be willed by God? There is no doubt that they are. The sin and the malice in them are not, it is true, willed by Him, but the pain and the injury resulting from them are undoubtedly willed by

Him; not because they beget miseries unto you, but because they are the seed out of which there will spring forth a harvest of eternal glory for you. To this will of God we are obliged to submit; and our petition, "Thy will be done," is for grace and strength to endure this storm. Nevertheless, while humbly bowing our heads before it, we may detest the sin of those who have brought it upon us, just as God Himself does, and also make every effort to defend ourselves against their wicked machinations. After doing this, we must acquiesce in the divine will, and patiently wait for the ultimate judgment of God. Thus, the absolute will of the Great Master is accomplished, when we humbly and patiently submit to the evils that come upon us, in consequence of the malice of men.

The conditional will of God, that is to say, the will of God which He is pleased to make dependent upon our will, inasmuch as we either may or may not accomplish it, is carried into effect by our obedience. By saying: "Thy will be done," we ask for grace to carry out this will. It is made known to us by His holy law. We carry it into effect, when we comply with what it prescribes, and abstain from doing what it forbids. It is manifested to us also by the interior inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and by the orders of those who have authority over us. By following out the one, and by submitting to the other, we fulfil the will of God, and by so doing, we make progress in virtue, we sanctify ourselves: "This is the will of God, your sanctification".

Now, it may be asked, are we able by our own unaided natural powers, to carry that will into effect? We reply: "Most certainly not," as we shall presently see. Yet it is all important that we should execute it. To do it, is the only glory that we can give to Him, and the chief test of our love. By accomplishing it, Christ proved His love for the Eternal Father; and we, by imitating Christ in this respect, prove our love for that same Eternal Father. In fact, there is left to us no other way in which to prove it. On our love for God, depends our right to heaven, and our right to heaven is won by doing the will of God: "He that doth the will of My

Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven". Yet, of ourselves, we cannot, as has already been said, accomplish that will. For our will, on which the accomplishment of that will depends, has been depraved by original sin. It is, consequently, inclined to revolt against God. It is opposed to anything entailing suffering, and suffering is inseparable from doing God's will. Hence, our will naturally feels a sort of disgust for the service of God, and for spiritual things which lead to Him, and which are intimately connected with His service. Because of this disgust, our will is averse to submission. Therefore, of its own native strength, it is unable to withhold itself from transgressions of God's will, that is to say, from sins ; it is unable to observe His commandments ; it is unable to suffer with resignation the ills of life. There is, consequently, wanting to it, a something which will give to it this power. That something is the help of God, or, in other words, it is His divine grace, which is obtained by prayer. Hence, Our Lord inserted in His prayer this petition, "Thy will be done," in order that in answer to it, God might impart to us the power to accomplish that will, of which power our fallen nature is destitute. It is the cry of our weakness unto His strength, asking Him to give us power to carry out that will, the accomplishment of which is an occasion of glory unto Him, and a source of beatitude unto us. It is, therefore, a cry that ought to come from a heart eagerly desirous of God's aid, and fully resolved to make a good use of it when given.

Think of these things, when you utter the words of this petition. If while making use of them, you transgress the law of God, resist His will, and bitterly complain of it, saying : "Why does God order this? why does He forbid that?" they will fill you with confusion. For, is it not like mocking God to make unto Him such a petition, if you intend not to conform your will to His, but strive to bend Him to conform His will to yours? Therefore, in order to make a right use of these words, the heart must be ready to submit to God's will. The request which they embody, must be made with the greatest earnestness and fervour. The literal fulfilment of their meaning

must be ardently desired—that God’s will may be done, not anyhow, nor in any way—but as it is done in heaven. In heaven, the will of God is promptly executed by the Angels and the Saints. There is no delay ; there is no criticism ; no searching for the motive of the great Father in issuing His decree. It is carried into effect with the utmost exactitude. Nothing is omitted, no matter how trifling, how unimportant it may seem to be. It is performed with constancy—no difficulty being suffered to obstruct its execution. It is done with love, in order to make its accomplishment more pleasing to God.

In precisely the same way, must the will of God be executed on earth. Our own will must be, as it were, clean blotted out, and God’s will put in its place. On the accomplishment of that will, our merit depends. Hence, the necessity for diligently seeking to know it, and when known, to carry it into effect as the Saints and the Angels do—promptly, exactly, constantly, and lovingly. Now, what is God’s will in your regard ? First, that you should keep His law; therefore, you must scrupulously observe all His commandments. Secondly, that you should obey those who hold His place ; therefore, you must not regard as trivial anything that is ordered by obedience. Thirdly, that you should do your duty as a schoolboy ; therefore, labour assiduously at all the branches of learning set before you by your various masters. Therefore, when at your morning prayer you say, “Thy will be done,” let it be with an attentive mind and fervent heart, beseeching God that during the course of the day, His will may be done both in you and by you. This will cause you humbly to submit to what are called the ills of life, and to perform the duties of your state both as a Catholic, and as a Catholic schoolboy. What a happiness this will be for you ! You will be obedient to the laws of God, and to the laws of your Superiors. Thus you will be at peace with God, with your neighbour, and with yourself. You will daily advance in virtue. You will make your calling and election sure. Therefore, you may confidently look forward to the possession of eternal beatitude ; for you will be daily and hourly doing the will of God, “and he that doth the will

of God, he shall enter into the kingdom of God". These are the words of Jesus Christ. They are the very truth. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD."

MATERIAL FOOD.

IN this petition, Our Lord has carefully observed the order which He taught us to follow in our pursuit of happiness: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice". Therefore, after directing us to ask for God's glory and our own eternal happiness, by the accomplishment of the divine will, He puts into our mouths a prayer for earthly sustenance, as being the most pressing of our material wants: "Give us this day our daily bread". The food for which Jesus bids us ask, is of two kinds—bread for the body, and bread for the soul, that is to say, material food and spiritual food. That which we have to say with respect to spiritual food, we will reserve for the next Lecture; in the present one, we will direct your attention to the consideration of what the petition means concerning material food. In this petition, the first thing that is worthy of your notice, is that it asks for only one kind of food, and that the most necessary and indispensable. He bids us ask for *bread*, not for superfluities, not for delicacies, not for a kind of food that is sumptuous. By so doing, He intimates to us how repugnant to His wishes are the lives of those, whose sole aim in life it seems to be to live in order to eat, whereas He would have us eat only in order to live. Also, we may take them as a hint to us from Him, that any one who day by day is supplied with the necessaries of life, has no just cause to complain of his lot. Consequently, our aim should be to fill our hearts with the sentiments which animated St. Paul and the other Apostles, "who having food and where-with to be clothed" were perfectly satisfied with their condition of life.

It is not so with the great majority of men. Bare necessities are not enough for them. They must have more

and yet more. They consider that life would not be worth living, unless its asperities were softened by at least a certain amount of luxury. Some are so devoured by this hunger for soft living, that they care not in what way these luxuries are procured, provided that they can secure the enjoyment of them. There is, consequently, danger of invading the rights and the possessions of others, in order to satisfy this greed. Knowing this propensity of the human heart, He Who fashioned it is careful to bid us ask for "*our* daily bread". Therefore, He would have us be content with what lawfully belongs to us. There are, of course, ways and means of grasping more than our due proportion. It is from these that God wishes us to refrain our hands, and to take for ourselves only *our own* bread, and not that which rightfully belongs to another. This petition is, therefore, a sort of intimation to us to live by lawful means ; to avoid deceitful ways, and other questionable methods by which men are wont to gather to themselves that which is not theirs ; to shun everything that savours of fraud or of injustice ; and by so doing, to win that bread which is strictly our own.

This bread, however, must not be regarded as so peculiarly our own, that others are excluded from all right to a share of it. There are times when that which is our own should be made the common property of others also. These are when distress is abroad, and when it has laid its grip upon the throats of our neighbours. Then it is that our superfluities become, in a certain sense, the property of our fellow-men. Then it is that God expects the doors of our treasures to be thrown wide open, and constitutes us His stewards, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, and to perform all those corporal works of mercy which we would wish others to perform for us, should the heavy hand of misfortune be laid upon us.

The dread of such a calamity, like some grim spectre, haunts the minds of many men. It hangs over them like a dark storm-cloud, blotting out the sunshine of life. The gaunt form of possible poverty seems ever to dog their steps. The effect of this dread upon them is most pernicious. Their

hearts are hardened. They become avaricious, hoarding up their wealth, and giving none of it to the poor. Now, as if to prevent this fear of adversity, God introduces into this divine prayer that which will effectually remove it from the heart ; for, when bidding us ask Him for bread, He makes us call it our *daily* bread. What does He insinuate by the employment of this epithet ? It is not thrown in without a good reason, for God never uses superfluous words. By causing us to ask for *daily* bread, He reminds us that our life is short, the brief span of a single day. Hence, we should not form for ourselves vast plans requiring long decades for their accomplishment. For, we have not come into this vale of tears to take up here a lasting abode ; to establish a family ; to amass a huge fortune. We are simply travellers journeying to another land, without any important interest in that through which we are hurrying. We are strangers in it, without property, and without rights. Why, then, these vast projects ? Our day will be ended long before they can be carried into effect. This is the lesson which God teaches us, by making us ask only for that which will suffice for one brief day.

You must not, however, for a moment imagine that by thus pointing out to us the shortness of life, God would wish us to cast aside that prudent foresight on which every wise man sets so great store. No ; all that He expects from us, and wishes to teach us by this petition, is to banish from our minds that worrying anxiety to provide for the future, those vast stores of wealth which make men forget their limited span of existence, and imagine that they are to abide here for ever. It is this forgetfulness that very often causes them to miss the aim of their existence, to fasten their affections upon perishable things, to be blind to the fact that very quickly must they go hence, leaving behind them those treasures which others, who have not laboured to amass them, will spend, perhaps, in riotous living.

Moreover, besides wishing to make us content with that which is necessary for our sustenance, to acquire it by lawful means, to be satisfied with the relief of our daily wants, God desires by this petition to impress upon our minds a truth

often lost sight of by thoughtless men. This truth is the fact of His sovereign dominion over everything in the world. He made all that is in the world. It comes from His treasures. It belongs to Him. If this is true, as all must admit, the natural consequence is, that we must have recourse to Him for everything of which we stand in need. Our wealth, if we possess any ; our success, if we have achieved any, does not come from ourselves, nor must it be attributed to our skill or to our sagacity, for if God had not seconded our efforts, all our striving would have been in vain. Of course, it must be admitted that very many men acquire vast wealth, without having had recourse to God. Nay, oftentimes it is by grievous offences against His law that great fortunes are amassed. Yet even in these cases it is God that makes their efforts prosper. By so doing, He manifests both His wisdom and His goodness, rewarding even His enemies, on account, perhaps, of some natural virtue which, through their iniquity, He is unable to recompense in any other way than by giving to it temporal prosperity.

But here an objection may be made, both by those who are blessed with an abundance of wealth, and by those who are smitten with what they call the curse of poverty. These latter may say : "God knows our wants ; He loves us ; He bestows upon us all that is necessary for our sustenance. Therefore, it is useless for us to labour in order to procure that which we know for certain God will give to us, if only we will ask Him for it." This conclusion is not correct ; for the mere asking for that of which we stand in need, is but one of the conditions for obtaining what we ask. Another is that we should labour for it ; for, we are told by God that in our fallen state such things are granted only to those who win them in the sweat of their brow. Moreover, our petition to Him for sustenance does not imply that He will, in some miraculous manner, supply our needs ; all that it asks is that He would aid us, and bless our efforts with fruitfulness. Therefore, besides the mere asking or prayer, our own co-operation is requisite, in order to move God to open wide unto us the treasures of His bounty.

While the poor object to the labour necessary for winning their daily bread, the rich find fault with us for urging upon them the necessity for prayer. Their objection to it is grounded upon the fact that they have no need to ask. They abound with all the good things of the world. They have money, they have lands, they have the fruits springing from these. Needing nothing, why should they ask God to give to them anything? The error of those who argue thus, consists in thinking that the possession of worldly wealth is enough to excuse them from asking God to give them their daily bread. It is quite true that, being the possessors of great wealth, they need nothing. But are they the masters of that wealth in such a way that God has no rights over it? Has He no dominion over their vast possessions? Most decidedly He has; for being sovereign Lord, He cannot divest Himself of these rights. Therefore, having over their worldly goods the power of supreme dominion, He can, if it so please Him, take away from the rich the goods which they possess. Has He not frequently done so? Do we not now see living in abject poverty, men who were once the possessors of great wealth? It is the power of God that has stripped them of that wealth of which they were only the stewards. Therefore, the rich as well as the poor, are obliged to pray for the continuance of their daily bread, in order that by so doing they may acknowledge the dominion of God, and propitiate Him to bestow that daily bread upon them.

From what has been said, we should draw for ourselves two practical conclusions. First, ever to recognise God as our most liberal benefactor. All the good that we have comes from Him; also, all the good that we can hope for, is drawn from His treasures. It is, therefore, our interest to be on good terms with Him, lest He should be moved to indignation against us, and close up His treasure-house, and divert the wealth of His favours to the solace of more worthy objects. Secondly, ever to thank Him for that which we receive, since gratitude is the only return that we can make to Him. He expects it from us; and Christ Our Lord, the incarnate God, shows us, by His own words, how much He resents ingrati-

tude. When only one of the ten lepers cleansed by Him returned to give Him thanks, He asked with sorrow, of those about Him : “ Were not *ten* made clean? Where are the other nine? ” A very practical way to exercise this duty of gratitude, is to resolve always to say, “ Thanks be to God,” after every favour that we receive, no matter by what channel God may cause that favour to flow into our hands. Another is, to devote at least some portion of our daily prayer, to the giving of thanks. A third is, to accustom ourselves to express our gratitude to our fellow-men, for even the smallest service done to us, and from this habit, to accustom ourselves to do as much for Our good God. Thus, we shall acquire the habit of thanking God for our daily bread, and of looking upon Him as the source whence all good is bestowed upon us.

“GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.”

SPIRITUAL FOOD.

FROM the words of Our blessed Lord to the Jews who sought Him, after having tasted the bread which He had miraculously multiplied, it is evident that there is a spiritual nutriment for the soul, as well as a material one for the body. “ Labour not,” He says, “ for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting.”¹ We may say, then, in a general sort of way, that this meat is everything that ministers to the spiritual life of the soul ; everything that adds to its strength, or that is calculated to maintain its vigour, and prevent it from being laid hold of by sin, that spiritual malady which often ends in eternal death. Divine grace is undeniably one of these spiritual aliments ; so also is prayer ; so too are the Sacraments. But as it would be impossible for us, within the compass of a few pages, adequately to treat of all these, we will confine what we have to say to only two species of this spiritual food for which we ask in the Lord’s Prayer, namely, to devout reading, and the reception of the Holy Eucharist.

¹ St. John vi. 27.

With respect to the word of God, which we find in devout reading, we have Our Lord's assurance that it is on this that our souls are fed: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God".¹ This word of God is found in the ordinary preaching of the Church's ministers; in the instructions which they impart; in the catechetical lessons which they give to the young. It is found also in the innumerable books which treat of our eternal interests. But it is chiefly in the Holy Scriptures, as interpreted by the authoritative voice of the Church, that the spiritual food of our souls is to be looked for. The sacred writings of which it is composed, are inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is His voice that speaks to us through the symbols of its words; and lest we should not understand aright these inanimate characters, He has left us the living voice and intelligence of the ever-present Church, to explain them to us with a clearness which, upon His own divine word, we know can never be obscured by error.

These writings, thus safeguarded for our benefit, contain a living word, an effectual word, more penetrating than any two-edged sword, for it reaches unto "the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, being a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart".² It is a word that Christ intrusted to His Apostles to be the instrument with which they were to convert the world. For, it is full of heavenly light, and divine grace flows through it into the soul, softening the hardness of the heart, shaking the fixed resolve, and gently leading the vanquished spirit to the feet of its Redeemer. It is more than this; for it is not a merely transient force, it is a seed of life, striking its roots deep down into the inmost recesses of our being, shooting upwards in luxurious growth, bearing fruit a hundred-fold, and enriching us with grace and immortality. With this word we are to feed our soul, and it is for it that we pray when we say: "Give us this day our daily bread".

If we would draw from this spiritual food all the benefits

¹ St. Matt. iv. 4.

² Heb. iv. 12.

that God intends it to impart, it must be taken and eaten for the only purpose for which He has prepared it. It is meant to convey to our souls truth, to feed them with it, and not to captivate the imagination by the glories of eloquence. It is intended for our profit, and not for our pleasure, by charming us with mere subtleties of speech. Therefore, to be of any advantage to us, to be in reality our *food*, it must be read in the same spirit as that in which it was written. Its truth must be its chief attraction. Attention must be given to what it says, and not to the manner in which it says it, nor to the person who gives utterance to it. Mere curiosity must not lead us to read or to study these sacred documents. To draw nourishment from them, they must be perused with humility of heart, with profound faith, and with purity of intention. Read with these dispositions, the Holy Scriptures will be to us as a rich banquet, and in them the spirit will find a nutriment which will endure unto everlasting life.¹

Now, although the Holy Scriptures, devout books, the burning words of zealous preachers, and the instructions of lawful pastors contain the spiritual food of the soul, yet there is another species of food as far surpassing in its excellence all these, as the glorious sunlight surpasses the artificial flame of a candle. This is the Eucharistic bread, which, in St. Matthew's Gospel, is called by Our Lord "our supersubstantial bread".² It is the body and blood of Jesus Christ given to us under the species or appearances of bread and wine. When about to treat of it, Our Lord said to the Jews who surrounded Him: "Moses gave you not bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven". When they asked Him to give them this wonderful bread, Jesus said plainly to them: "I am the bread of life". At this the crowd began to murmur, and thereupon Our Lord repeated this assertion, promising everlasting life to those who should eat that bread. When they began again to protest against this statement, He still more emphatically told them that unless

¹ *Imit. of Christ*, Bk. 1, chap. v.

² St. Matt. vi. 11.

they ate His flesh and drank His blood, they should not have any spiritual life in them.

In another place, He told them that the bread which He should give them was His flesh for the life of the world. On this public occasion, He promised this heavenly food, but on the night before His Passion, He accomplished that promise, when taking into His hands bread, He gave thanks, and said : "This is My body". Then taking the chalice, He said : "This is My blood". What He then did, He gave to His Apostles and to their successors the power to do, in the words : "This do for a commemoration of Me".

From that day there has ever existed in the Church of God this Table from which the faithful receive the body and blood of the Lord for their supersubstantial food. It is for this especially that we ask, when we say : "Give us this day our daily bread". Unless we eat of it, we shall have no life in us. Like men who are deprived of material sustenance, we shall grow weak and become an easy prey to our enemies. Therefore, whoever wishes to preserve his spiritual life, must eat of that bread and drink of that chalice. By partaking of the Sacrament under only one form, namely, under the form of bread, we partake also of the blood of Christ; for, under that form, we receive the whole Christ—body, blood, soul, and divinity. We, that is to say, the laity, need not receive the chalice as the sacrificing priest does. The Church, under whose protection and guardianship the Most Holy Sacrament is placed has, for wise reasons, so willed it. By withholding the cup from us, she does not, as her enemies assert, give a mutilated sacrament to her children, nor are we by this disciplinary law deprived of anything, since we receive under the one kind the whole and undivided Christ.

As, then, the Holy Sacrament is our daily bread, there are certain conditions required in those who wish worthily to receive it. Out of reverence for this heavenly food, they must be fasting from the preceding midnight. Furthermore, they must come to receive it with the most profound faith, firmly believing that it is the very body and the very blood sacrificed for their salvation on Calvary. Their senses cannot perceive

this ; for the eye sees in the Sacrament only what appears to be bread and wine ; the taste is cognisant only of the savour inherent in these two elements ; the touch conveys to the mind only the feeling which these elements impart. But, though these senses of their bodies fulfil their office, by reporting to the mind the outward appearances of things, they do not, and they cannot judge of the substance that lies beneath those appearances. To do this, is the office of the mind, and to the mind, the sense of hearing conveys the words of Christ. What do those words teach ? That under these poor, mean elements or appearances, there is present Christ Our Lord. His body is there ; His soul is there ; His blood is there ; His divinity is there. Hearing this and believing it, the true Christian falls down and adores.

Besides faith, the worthy recipient must have purity of heart ; for this Sacrament is called a sacrament of the living. When the heart is not pure, when it is soiled by mortal sin, the man is spiritually dead. To him, the Eucharist is no good. It is food, and food benefits only the living. Therefore, worthily to receive it, the heart must be alive to grace, or, in other words, it must be pure, free from all grave sin. In addition to faith and purity, he who comes to eat of this heavenly bread, must bring to the eating of it, fervour and devotion, which we may call the hunger of the soul. Then, the partaking of this spiritual food will be most beneficial to the soul. It will not only sustain its life, but add to its strength, so that it will be able to walk bravely through the difficulties and the dangers that beset its path through this world.

To draw from this food all the benefit that God has made it capable of imparting to us, the faithful Christian must be careful not only to prepare himself worthily to receive it, but after its reception, to spend some time in devout thanksgiving for the gift bestowed by God. Received with dispositions such as these, that divine bread will work wonders in the soul and will make it so powerful, that it will easily vanquish the devil and all the legions of darkness arrayed against it.

As in the preceding Lecture, so also in this, we may put by way of an objection, a question which will doubtless have

suggested itself to many: Why should we pray to God to give us this spiritual food? Have we not this nutriment already in our possession? Yes, we have; for the Sacraments are ordinarily always within our reach. The grace of God is plentifully bestowed upon us, oftentimes before we ask for it. The Scriptures also are at our disposition. We may listen to preachers, attend instructions, and make use of many other helps, all which are undoubtedly the spiritual food of our souls. Nevertheless, we must ask, and ask daily, for that bread of which we every day stand in need. The reason is, that in punishment of our sins, our ingratitude, our infidelity to grace, and the ill use that we make of His priceless gifts, God may deprive us of this nourishment. If you need proofs, you have only to open the Sacred Scriptures, and there you will find many instances of such a withdrawal of favours, not only in the case of individuals, but of whole nations. That which has happened to others, may happen to us also. Thus, men sometimes weary of prayer; they abstain from the Sacraments; they close their ears against the word of God. In punishment of this tepidity, God retires by little and little from their hearts. He withdraws from them His special graces. Then they fall into sin, and, as it were, put themselves beyond the reach of grace. They grow weak, as men do who will not eat, and at last they die the death.

Therefore, although the bread of life is so plentifully bestowed upon us, though it is within easy reach of our hands, yet we must pray God to continually bestow it upon us, not to regard our many shortcomings, but to pardon us, and to shower His mercies upon us. Therefore, in order to avoid a calamity which has fallen upon others, we must never weary of asking Him to give us our daily bread. When you make this petition, keep well before your mind that for which you ask. You need for your mind the food of divine truth, and that truth you find in the teaching of the Church, in devout books, and particularly in the books of Holy Scripture. Its sacred pages should, therefore, be frequently under your eyes. You must not grow tired of them; you must not throw them aside, in order to read the frivolous nonsense which but too often is

the only mental nourishment that boys are willing to take. Instead of wearying of them, read them with assiduity, with attention, with reverence, and they will become for you that powerful word piercing your heart as with a keen blade, and drawing thence sincere sorrow for sin. Then resolve to be a frequent communicant. The oftener you sit at that Heavenly Table, the more virtuous will you become. You will clothe yourself with strength and with courage to fight the battles of the Lord ; you will ensure for yourself the victor's crown ; you will merit the reward of the eternal kingdom.

“FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES.”

To trespass, means unlawfully to pass over limits set up to protect the property or the rights of another, and by so doing, to invade that other's rights. When we pass over the limits which God has set to our liberty, we transgress His commands, we sin, we invade His rights, and by invading them, we become His debtors, being obliged, by repentance and by suffering, to pay back what we have unjustly taken. Hence, instead of the word *trespass*, the Vulgate uses the word *debt*, and in our English version, we ask God to forgive us our debts, as we forgive others the debts contracted by them in our regard. Let us, for the present, confine our attention to the petition which we make to God, and afterwards we will consider the condition attached to it.

The petition is for a remission of the debts contracted by our sins. These sins are truly and really debts ; because by them we have invaded God's rights, His rights to our obedience, love and service, which consist in keeping His commandments: “If any man love Me, he will keep My commandments”. If we injure our fellow-men by invading their rights, we become their debtors as well as God's debtors ; for God has set up limits to keep us out of our neighbour's domains. Therefore, it is the remission of these debts contracted with respect to God and to our neighbour, that we ask for in this petition of the Lord's Prayer. These debts are in a peculiar way our

own, inasmuch as they spring from the malice of our perverse will. Consequently, they must be admitted, recognised, not repudiated, nor must any attempt be made to justify our actions. Our prayer is, therefore, a humble supplication, not only for ourselves, but for our fellow debtors both with respect to God and to ourselves.

A moment's reflection will show us the necessity for making such a request to Our heavenly Father. Each of us has sinned by refusing to give to God that humble service, that ardent love, that prompt obedience which we owe to Him. In looking back into the past, many are able to count weeks, months, perhaps years, during which every day was marked by acts of rebellion against His commands. Many of these acts were grievous. Only God can know their gravity and their number. Our intelligence has revolted against Him; our imagination has joined in its rebellion; our will has set its seal upon these unjustifiable deeds; our bodily powers have lent their aid to these insurgents. The eye has used its vision for this purpose; the ear has listened to treasonable projects; the mouth has spoken them; the feet have run to join in them; the hands have carried them into execution; the heart has given to them its love.

I have said, that sometimes there has not passed a single day upon which we have not been unfaithful to God. Might I not add, that oftentimes there has not passed a single hour, in which we have not trampled under our feet His inalienable rights? These acts of rebellion may have been of a very serious nature, each of them constituting us debtors for an enormous amount. But even if they have not been of this serious nature, we have not been free from those minor debts contracted by reason of our failings and shortcomings. There have been negligences in God's service, lukewarmness, impatience, anger, departures from the truth, and a thousand other things by which we have added to our indebtedness to God. Hence, we are in the same condition as that in which the faithless steward found himself, when his master came on a sudden and called for his accounts. We owe God ten thousand talents, and we have not a farthing wherewith to meet our

liabilities ; so that besides being debtors, we are insolvent debtors.

This is no mere pious exaggeration. For God is so immense, so immeasurably above us, that any offence against Him, assumes its magnitude from the difference existing between the culprit and the Being wronged and offended by his sin. That offence, however, must be expiated, and the person who is obliged to make the expiation, has nothing wherewith to make it. Not all the prayers, nor all the penances, nor all the good works of all the Saints could expiate or atone for the slightest venial sin. Only One equal to God can adequately do this. Therefore, we can only throw ourselves upon the infinite mercy of God, and offer to Him the atonement of the Man-God Who paid the penalty due to our sins. This is what we do when we offer up this petition of the “Our Father,” and it is for this very purpose that God has inserted it in this divine prayer.

But we must clearly understand, that the remission of even our venial faults is not given to us for the mere asking. No sin can be blotted out without a change of will, for, it is the will that has sinned by turning away from God, and by adhering to something upon which He has set His ban. Therefore, in order that the guilt incurred by so doing should be blotted out, the will must, by sincere sorrow, withdraw itself from that upon which it has fastened, that is to say by contrition, which implies also a firm resolve to avoid the evil that has been committed. If recited with these dispositions, the Lord’s Prayer has the power to blot out all slight, venial offences. In the case of grave offences, of deadly sins, these dispositions are not enough to secure pardon ; for, to the remission of such as these God has attached another condition, which is the humble confession of them to an approved priest. For this purpose, there is a sacrament instituted by Him, the Sacrament of Penance, the only plank left for the salvation of those who have made shipwreck of their innocence. That Sacrament must be received either in reality or in desire by those who, after Baptism, have sinned grievously. They are obliged to make a humble, sorrowful admission of their

misdeeds, and then the judge appointed by Christ pronounces over them the sentence of remission. It is to obtain the proper dispositions for a worthy reception of this Sacrament, that this petition of the Lord's Prayer must be said by all those who are in God's debt, on account of grievous sins.

For two reasons God puts into our mouths the words of that petition : first, to inspire us with confidence in His mercy ; secondly, with profound humility, on account of our unworthiness. First, with confidence ; for when the light of God is flashed into our minds, and the soul under its rays obtains a clear view of the condition to which its revolt has brought it, the horror of the situation and the enormity of its misdeeds are apt to cast it into the depths of despair. Its baseness and ingratitude seem to it to be beyond the reach of pardon. In moments such as these, the words of the petition raise up the downcast spirit ; they are God's own words that it uses ; they put no limit to God's mercy ; they ask pardon for all sins, no matter how enormous they may be ; and the soul knowing this, confidently sues for this boon. But though inspiring confidence, these words prevent the soul from falling into presumption. For this petition is to be made not once, nor twice, nor thrice during the course of a lifetime, but every day, and by that fact, the heart is made to feel that every day it is guilty of the offences which it promised to avoid. Hence, it is made painfully conscious of its own weakness, of its need of infinite compassion, and of its unworthiness to obtain mercy. There is, consequently, engendered in the heart a fear that if it do not make more strenuous efforts daily to sink itself deeper in the abyss of humility, the pardon for which it craves will be withheld, and the justly offended Master will proceed to visit it with that measure of justice which it so richly deserves. These two dispositions make it acceptable to God, Who never spurns from His presence a heart that is lowly and full of sorrow for the evil which it has done.

The frequency with which we are made to ask pardon for our many delinquencies will, perhaps, make us wonder why it should be so necessary for us to send up this petition to God. We have confessed our sins ; we have heartily grieved for

them; and we have been mercifully absolved. Why, then, should we over and over again ask for their remission? It is because we can never have absolute certainty that we have been purified from their polluting stain. By the mouth of the Wise Man, the Holy Ghost bids us not to be without fear of sin forgiven. For, though we may have confessed our misdeeds and wept over them bitter tears, we cannot be quite sure that our dispositions have been such as God requires. In them, there may have been something wanting, some unbecoming motive so deeply hidden away under the folds of our innermost being, as not to have been perceived by us. Therefore, there is always some room for doubt, and that doubt should fill us with humble fear that we have not done all that God wished us to do. Thus, by repeatedly asking for pardon and renewing our sorrow, we shall wash ourselves yet more and more from our iniquities, and cleanse ourselves completely of our sins, through the all-powerful aid of divine grace.

Besides this reason, there is another for the frequent, the ceaseless, repetition of this prayer. It is that to every sin there is attached a penalty which must be undergone either in this world or in the next. This penalty is punishment which follows sin as a shadow follows substance. When the guilt of sin is remitted, the penalty is not always remitted together with it, as we plainly see in the case of our first parents and of King David. God pardoned the sin of which they had been guilty, but the temporal punishment due to it, He did not remit; they had patiently to submit to it. So is it with us also. That punishment may be lessened, if we will not spare ourselves. It is for this diminution of punishment that we pray, when we ask God to forgive us our debts. Can any one for a moment suppose that the insignificant penance imposed upon us in the sacred tribunal, in which our sentence of pardon is granted, will be enough to cancel this debt? Our common sense makes us sure that it will not. Are we certain that the numerous indulgences granted to us by the Church are all gained by us? That same common sense fills us with very grave doubts on this score also. Therefore, the necessity for

continual prayer to God, that He would graciously remit to us all our debts.

Therefore, when you repeat this petition of the Lord's Prayer, let it be with a heart full of sorrow for sin. Ask for full pardon for all sin whether grave or light. Ask for pardon, not only for yourself, but for others who have, perhaps, been led into sin, by your evil example. Never think that you have done enough to atone for your sin. Ever strive to apply to your soul the ransom that Christ has paid for you. Be not without fear of sin forgiven. Keep ever before your eyes the examples of God's wrath against sin, examples made manifest to you in the terrible temporal chastisements inflicted upon those who have been freed from its eternal guilt. Therefore, let the petition for a remission of this guilt frequently rise from your heart ; and not only for a remission of this, but also of that temporal punishment which otherwise must be undergone either in this world, or in the penal fires of Purgatory.

“AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US.”

HAVING in the preceding Lecture spoken of the petition for the pardon of offences or debts, let us in the present devote a few moments to the consideration of the condition annexed to it, and of the way in which that condition must be fulfilled.

By saying, “forgive us our trespasses,” we ask for pardon, and we beseech God to grant that pardon, on condition that we ourselves freely forgive others the offences which they have committed against us. Referring to this condition, Our Lord says : “ If you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences ; but if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences ”.¹ It is not difficult to discover the reason for the insertion of this clause in God's promise of pardon. He is the guardian of each individual man, and of the society formed out of the individuals of which it is composed. As guardian of the

¹ St. Matt. vi. 14, 15.

individual, He wishes to protect him against the vengeance which injury, either by deed or by word, is sure to stir up in man's over-sensitive heart. He desires to ward off from the injured party the consequences invariably following in the wake of passion, which is allowed to expend itself in glutting the animal sense of injury received. As the guardian of human society, He wills to deliver it from the ills which would invade it, if the individual members were not checked in the desire to visit those who injure them, or whom they suppose to have injured them, with punishment for their offences, whether real or imaginary. That it is not only a wise precaution against evil, but a just condition for forgiveness, every fair-minded man will readily admit.

Just consider, for a moment, the condition in which we are placed by our sins with respect to God. We sin by thought, by word, by desire, by act. We sin every day, nay, every hour, and sometimes many times in the hour. These offences are often grievous; and when they are not grievous, they are nevertheless offences against God; and by that fact, they assume a degree of malice which it is dreadful to contemplate. Who can estimate the number of these offences? We ourselves—the guilty party—admit our inability to do so. But though we are not able to do it, God is, and the recording Angel has marked each of them in his book. They will all be produced against us, when we shall be called to judgment. If at this moment, God were suddenly to summon us to give an account of our stewardship, we should, no doubt, find ourselves in the same predicament as that in which the unjust steward found himself. He owed his master ten thousand talents, and he had not a single farthing wherewith to cancel his enormous debt. Therefore, he did just what we do when we ask God for pardon for our multitudinous offences—he fell on his knees and craved for mercy. God granted that mercy.

Now upon this fact, we may form an argument and say: "If God forgives me the enormous sum of my grave and manifold sins, it is surely only becoming that I should forgive my fellow-servant the few and light debts which he has

contracted towards me, by the offences of which he has been guilty in my regard". This condition God has imposed, and our reason at once sees and admits its justice. If we will not admit it, if we will savagely require full payment, we put ourselves in the same position as that in which the merciless steward put himself, by refusing to spare his hapless debtor. God will not pardon us, because we will not pardon our fellow-servant. His condition for granting us forgiveness is not only just, it is advantageous to us. For it helps us to comply with a very difficult command, upon the fulfilment of which our eternal happiness depends, inasmuch as we cannot enter heaven unless our sins are forgiven, and those sins God will never forgive, unless we forgive others the offences which they have committed against us. Knowing this, and seeing the justice of it, self-interest will urge us to pardon these injuries.

This sacrifice of our will, like all self-denial, is so pleasing to God, that He will efficaciously help us to make it complete, by causing us "to forgive them from our hearts". For He will soften those hearts and fill them with His charity; and then shall we be able to do that which, without His divine grace, we should be utterly unable to accomplish. Hence, the condition for forgiveness, imposed by Him, is not only just, it is most advantageous to us.

Having seen the reasons for this condition, let us, in the next place, consider in what way we should comply with it. The condition, as we know so well, is that we must forgive our neighbours, if we wish God to forgive us. In what way do we wish God to forgive us? We wish Him completely to free us from all our debts. Therefore, we must completely absolve our neighbours from the debts which they have contracted towards us. To do this, we are obliged to abstain from all internal and from all external acts of vengeance. Some are under the delusion that if they do not, in biting words of scorn, address their enemies, nor do unto them acts that inflict upon them serious damage, they have fulfilled the condition imposed by God. This, however, is a false idea. To act in this way may be the result of policy. The danger

of doing injury to others might deter many a one from executing the act of vengeance to which he is prompted by his outraged feelings, while all the time the desire of revenge is blazing within him. To obtain forgiveness, God requires from us more than mere abstention from outward acts. He forbids not only the outward act, but the internal thought and desire of carrying it into execution. Therefore, He insists upon the banishment from our minds of all feelings of resentment, of all desire of revenge, of all ill will, otherwise He will not accept the pardon which we offer. He will treat us as the master treated the merciless steward : "So also shall My heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from his heart".¹

Therefore, our forgiveness of others must be such as will preserve us not only from all external, but from all internal acts of hostility, which only God is able to detect and punish. With respect to these latter, you must bear in mind that I speak only of those to which you give a voluntary consent, for only such are sinful. It will in no way detract from your good will to forgive, if you experience involuntary feelings of rancour, or of irritation, or if you detect yourself indulging in some secret satisfaction at the ills which befall those who have injured you. All these emotions being involuntary, are not in reality human acts, but only the natural movements of the irascible appetite. Over these we have not complete control, and in spite of us, they will make their existence felt. They are incitements to sin, and consequently are evil only when assent is given to them. If we repulse and detest them as soon as we become aware of their presence, we may be perfectly certain that we are free from all blame.

If, then, we abstain from outward acts of hostility, and from assent to any internal emotions of hate, have we done enough in the way of pardoning our enemies, and complied with the condition imposed by Our Lord? No; this is not enough. We must do something more. We must *love* them : "Love your enemies; do good to those that hate you," says Our divine

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 35.

Lord ; and in saying this, He does not give us a mere counsel with which we may or may not comply, but a positive precept which we cannot transgress without being guilty of sin. However, the love which He commands us to give to our enemies, is not that sweet, natural, affectionate love which we feel for friends and relatives ; it consists in that benevolent will which causes us not to refuse to them the ordinary marks of civility, and moves us to do unto them all the good that justice and charity require.

From these words, it is evident that the love spoken of by Our Lord, consists in internal good will, and in outward demonstrations of it. Good will alone will not suffice ; nor will mere external demonstrations of it be enough. These latter, without internal good will, are mere hypocrisy ; while good will without the external manifestations of it, has often only an imaginary existence. The external demonstrations of internal good will are of two kinds, special and common ; the *special*, are those which we give to friends, and consist in familiar intimacy, reciprocal confidence, and community of interest ; the common, are those which we show to all men, or at least to all who are of our own rank. They are such as are interchanged among relatives, neighbours, and acquaintances, and they consist for the most part in seeing them, saluting them when passing, speaking to them when we meet, and in other acts of a similar nature.

Now, the divine law does not oblige us to give to our enemies the *special* marks of good will, because we are not called upon to give them more affection than we are expected to bestow upon men in general ; but if we are not, as a general rule, obliged to give to these latter any special marks of benevolence, with much more reason we cannot be compelled to manifest them to those who have injured us. But while exempting us from the obligation of showing to them these special marks of good will, God does not free us from the obligation of showing to them the *common* signs of good will. They are entitled to our salutation, as other men are ; if they show to us marks of civility, we must make them a return of civility ; when they speak to us, we must politely answer

them. To refuse these kindly offices would be a proof to our enemies that we hate them, and wish them ill ; and would, therefore, furnish them with a reason for treating us in the same way. The result would be scandal to all who know us, and who are aware of our estrangement.

If, however, we have good reason to think that the manifestation of these signs of good will would provoke our enemies to anger and irritation, then the omission of them, being the less of two evils, would be an act of prudent charity. However, as such a disposition on the part of our enemies is a matter of rare occurrence, care must be taken to see that our prudence is not a mere pretext to disguise our smouldering ill will. Even if the offending parties will not make the just satisfaction which their fault requires, that fact does not exempt us from showing to them these common marks of good will. By the law of God, they are obliged to be reconciled to us. A mere expression of regret, on their part, will not suffice for suitable satisfaction ; but satisfaction for the injury done must be made. If they will not make it, then we, by treating them with Christian charity, shall have the joy of having done our duty.

The offender, as a matter of course, must make the first advance to reconciliation ; but if he will not do this, the offended party is not, on that account, released from the obligation both of showing to him the external marks of good will, and of feeling for him all the internal sentiments of Christian charity. Yet, while so doing, there is no necessity for the offended party to be on terms of familiarity with him, nor to proclaim abroad that he has not been injured, nor to say that he does not require from him suitable satisfaction and reparation for the injury inflicted. Without any breach of charity, he may claim legitimate satisfaction for the damage done to his goods, or to his reputation, or to his person.

The only thing that must be most carefully guarded against, is that while safeguarding his own interests, he does not suffer passion to mingle with his proceedings and gain the upperhand. For, in matters of this nature, the danger is, not that we shall be too large in our views, but that we

shall be not large enough, not so large as we are obliged to be by the law of God. For, the forgiveness of injuries is a matter which for us is an absolute necessity, for which nothing else can supply, without which we cannot please God, nor enter into possession of our eternal inheritance. Moreover, it is a matter in which self-deception is very easy. We easily persuade ourselves that we have done our duty in this respect. We give judgment in our own case, and calm our troubled conscience by an imperfect reconciliation which is valueless in the sight of God. Moreover, we are very much inclined to believe that we are the more injured party in the transaction, and often enough when we are manifestly in the wrong, we fabricate reasons for being offended.

Therefore, be large-minded and large-hearted in all matters in which the forgiveness of injuries is in question, and do everything in your power to win over those who are at variance with you, to that union of charity in which the miserable littlenesses, and the paltry offences which we commit against one another, will be utterly forgotten. Hence, whenever you offer up that petition of the Lord's Prayer, beseeching God to forgive you your trespasses as you forgive those that trespass against you, try to bear in mind the reasons for the condition which He has imposed, and ask for grace to comply with it. God, on His side, will readily bestow what you ask, and you will forgive all that trespass against you ; you will forgive them from your heart ; and having done so, you may be quite sure that your Heavenly Father will pardon you all the offences that you have committed against Him ; for He has said : " If you forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you your offences ".

"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION."

OWING to our fallen state, we are all, alas ! but too familiar with the nature of temptation, to need any elaborate explanation of it ; nevertheless, in order thoroughly to understand the meaning of this petition, we shall be obliged first, to point out in what sense the word is used in the Lord's Prayer, before

we put before you what it is that we ask for when we beseech God "not to lead us into temptation".

"To tempt" has two significations. The first means to *try*, to put anything to the proof to see of what nature it is. Thus, we try a chain, destined to hold some great ship at her anchorage; or a watch, to see whether it will keep accurate time; or a friend, to discover whether he will be trustworthy. In this sense, God Himself is said to have "tempted" Abraham, when He ordered him to sacrifice his son Isaac; Tobias, when He afflicted him with poverty and blindness; and Job, when He stripped him of all his wealth, and struck him with a grievous bodily ailment. So also, when He sends to the just tribulations and adversities of various kinds, He is said to "tempt them". God does this, not because He has any need of these means to discover of what metal His servants are made, for, being omniscient, He can be ignorant of nothing; we, however, are obliged to make use of these methods to acquire the knowledge of which we stand in need. It is evident, therefore, that in the sense of *trying*, God may be said "to tempt" men, for this trial does not lead them into the commission of anything morally wrong; it rather increases their virtue and crowns it with more ample rewards. Consequently, when we ask God not to lead us into temptation, there is no question of anything evil, for God never tempts men to break His own divine law.

The second meaning of the word "tempt," is to induce or to incite any one to evil. Of any trial of this kind, it is impossible, as we have already said, that God should be the author. The source of this kind of temptation is in ourselves. For, we inherit from our first parents a fallen nature. In consequence of their sin, our carnal or fleshly man is in revolt against our spiritual man. The passions of our flesh continually urge us to rebel against the rule of our spiritual nature. To these incitements to rebellion, we unfortunately but too often yield, and by so doing, contract evil habits, which throw the weight of their influence into the scale against our reason and the law of God. These enemies of our soul are called the concupiscences of the flesh.

Besides this ever-present evil which we carry about with us, there is another enemy most closely allied with it. This is called "the world," consisting of that vast body of evilly living men who, by their bad example, their pernicious maxims, their mockeries, their sneers, and even by their flattery, urge us to walk in the broad way, and trample under foot all the precepts of God. When flattery and the arts of persuasion fail, they have recourse to violence, to threats, to bitter persecutions, in order to accomplish their object.

To these enemies, we must not forget to add the devil, that spirit of evil who first revolted from God, and who for his crime was thrust, together with all who followed his example, into the pit of hell. These malignant devils skilfully make use of our passions and of the vices of the world, to entangle us in their meshes, and seduce us from our allegiance to God. These three, then, are the sources of temptations to embrace evil and to turn away from good.

We may now, with this knowledge in our possession, inquire in what sense it is that we ask God not to lead us into temptation. From the distinction which we have made about the word *tempt*, it is evident that we do not ask Him not to lead us into evil, as only the devil, the world, and the flesh do this. For, although the Scripture makes use of expressions which seem to imply that God does lead men into evil—as for instance when it says that He makes them transgress, blinds them, hardens their hearts, and the rest—yet these are only methods of speech employed by the sacred writers to point out that, in punishment of men's sins, He withdraws from them that divine help which would enable them to resist evil. These words, then, are not to be taken literally, as if God positively urged men on to evil, but figuratively, inasmuch as by withdrawing Himself, He suffers them to become blind to the light, and to harden their hearts against the promptings of divine grace. It is by allowing this to happen to them that He is said, in Scripture, to harden their hearts, and, by so doing, to lead them into temptation. As is manifest, He does not do this by any positive act which pushes them on to evil, but by a negative one, that is to say, by the withdrawal of

His grace, a withdrawal which is a well-deserved punishment for their disloyalty and disobedience.

Therefore, when we lift up our voices and ask God not to lead us into temptation, we beseech Him to look mercifully upon our weakness, to be nigh unto us during the storm of temptation, and to minister to us the strength requisite to battle manfully against it, when in the fury of its onslaught, it rushes down upon us. You will observe that there is not in it a word implying that we ask to be delivered from temptation. Sore as is the trial to which it subjects us, great as is the trouble which it causes, and terrible as is the danger to which it exposes us, nevertheless God does not wish us to be freed from it. For, in the first place, taking into consideration our present position, it is simply impossible. We are in the flesh, and being in the flesh, we are in a state of warfare. The flesh continually fights against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh ; reason against our brute passions ; our passions against reason ; faith fights against sense, and sense endeavours to overthrow faith. As long as the union between soul and body endures, the contest will go on. No one has ever escaped it, and even the holiest, the purest souls have had to bear the brunt of this warfare. Our Lord Himself though sinless and incapable of sinning, suffered Himself to be tempted. Though He could not be overcome, He allowed Himself to be involved in the battle, in order to encourage us by His example. Therefore, you may conclude that there is no state so holy, no place so solitary, as to be free from the trial of temptation. Even if the devil did not stir up our passions to revolt, and if the world did not endeavour to seduce us from our allegiance, yet our fallen nature would bring on the battle, for, as Our Lord says : "A man's enemies are they of his own household".

But even supposing that it were possible for us to be free from temptation, such a condition in our present circumstances would not be for our advantage. For, consider what these temptations do for us. We do not know our own misery and wretchedness, till we are made to pass through the fire which they enkindle, just as soldiers do not know whether they are

courageous or not, till they stand within range of their enemies' rifles. If they are cowards, they become aware of it then. So also is it with us. As long as we have nothing to trouble us, no struggle of the flesh against the spirit, no test of our patience, no smart of humiliations, we imagine that we are devoted servants of God ; we feel our hearts full of affection for Him, full of great resolves, full of virtues. The day of trial comes. Then we see how weak is our will, how small our store of patience, how unreal our humility. We then distrust our strength, we are on the alert to receive our enemies, we pray for help, and when it is not at once vouchsafed to us, we learn patiently to endure. These are great advantages. But a greater advantage still is the outcome of these trials, namely, the amassing for ourselves a store of merits which, if we persevere to the end, God will crown with eternal life. As if to bring this fact prominently before our minds, Our Lord, in answer to St. Paul's prayer to be delivered from the buffetings of this storm, said to him : " My grace is sufficient for thee".

From what has been said thus far, you see that freedom from temptation is not possible, and that if it were possible, it would not be to your advantage. This conclusion may possibly lead you to think, that if temptations are so profitable, it will be good to pray for their increase both in number and in strength. We might assent to this, if you were sure of victory in every contest ; but who can promise you this ? No one. The most virtuous cannot have this certainty. For, consider the matter : our enemies are very numerous—"their name is legion" ; they never weary of the contest ; they are immensely strong.

We, on the other hand, are very weak ; we are but as one against millions ; we easily are wearied of the contest ; we speedily faint ; we give way to cowardice. Therefore, the chances are that we shall be vanquished. Consequently, instead of asking God to increase the number and the violence of our temptations, we should be content to pray for strength not to yield, and for His powerful protection during this ceaseless strife.

We are the more urged to this, when we bear in mind how numerous and how dangerous are the passions stirring within us. We are driven to it as our only chance of safety, when we look around us and perceive the many snares set to entangle our feet. If we have but recently changed our manner of life, if we are still struggling against the tyranny of bad habits, we have even more reason to act with this prudent caution. For, these hang like a heavy weight about our necks, and impede our movements. Like half-healed wounds, they smart when touched, they are ever ready to break out afresh. The imagination is stained and full of dangerous images. The memory is stored with scenes that are for us full of deadly peril. We are like men recovering from a fever; we can barely totter along. The slightest push would bring us to the earth.

Besides, has not Our Lord said: "Without Me you can do nothing"? Therefore, the necessity for going to Him and relying upon His strength to help us in battling against our enemies. If we trust to ourselves, we can expect nothing but disaster. In an instant we may pass from His side to the camp of His bitterest foes. An unguarded look, a word, a passing thought may bring about this calamity. Consequently, if we wish to remain at our post, and, remaining there to fight manfully against the devil, the world, and ourselves, we must from the depth of a contrite and humble heart with all earnestness call to God and say: "Lead us not into temptation".

Let this petition, then, frequently ascend from your heart, not for deliverance from temptation, because deliverance would be disadvantageous to you, but for God's help to conquer temptation. You will obtain that for which you ask, if only you will comply with the conditions implicitly contained in this prayer. It would be a contradiction in terms to ask God to help you in time of temptation, if you yourself thrust yourself into it. To do so, and then to ask Him to deliver you from it, would be to ask Him to lead you to heaven in a miraculous sort of way. God does not do this; but by the ordinary way of prudent action. Hence, He looks for your own co-operation

in this work, and without that co-operation, He will not save you. Therefore, if you wish to be heard, you must not thrust yourself into temptation, by going into the occasion of sin. For this purpose, you must be on the watch to detect the first approach of your enemies. You must avoid them ; and if you cannot, then the moment that they attack you, you must lift up your voice in prayer. If you act thus, you may be sure that ever and always God will be at your side to deliver you from the temptation. In the strife "He will make issue so that you will be able to bear it," and you will be victorious in all your contests with the enemies of your salvation.

TEMPTATION.

ST. AUGUSTINE in one of his homilies says: "If you hold out before a sheep any green stuff, it is drawn towards it ; if nuts are shown to a boy, he is drawn towards them".¹ In these words, he puts before us our natural instinct for that which attracts our sensitive appetite. It is to this instinct for good, whether real or only apparent, that the devil, the world, and the flesh continually appeal. They set before the sensitive appetite that which appears to it to be good, and that good draws the man towards it. But then the intelligence comes into play, and points out that it is only an apparent good, under which there lies concealed a deadly poison. From this there arises in the soul a struggle or contest, and to that contest we give the name "temptation".

Now, very many persons imagine that whenever they feel within themselves this battle between what the sensitive appetite so strongly urges them to accept, and what the intelligence and the conscience call upon them to reject, they are guilty of sin. They are, therefore, perplexed, troubled, and in a state of doubt, fearing that they have not been faithful to God, without, however, being quite sure that they have gone over to His enemies.

¹ St. Aug. *In Joan.*, tract. 26.

It will, therefore, be our object in this Lecture, to tell you when it is that you sin during these contests, and when you do not. Having done this, we will next point out to you the means which you must employ in order always to be victorious over the suggestions of your spiritual enemies.

In order to make perfectly clear to you the various stages of a temptation, let me suppose that there are two hostile armies in the field, equal in number, and commanded by Generals of undoubted ability. One of these armies, however, holds a strong position which it will be impossible to take by force. Seeing this, the commander of the opposing army, through the intervention of an officer, promises to his rival an immense sum of money, if he will betray to him the key of the position. The General to whom this proposal is made, listens to it ; the prospect which it opens out before him of boundless wealth, pleases him ; and, after for some time carefully weighing the matter, he accepts the bribe, and yields the advantage to his adversary. In this example, you have the three stages of temptation. First, there is the *suggestion* of evil. If the evil thus suggested is wilfully entertained, there is what is called *delectation*. If the will after being enlightened by the intelligence yields to this delectation, there is *consent*. The question, therefore, to be examined is whether sin is committed in each of these stages.

The mere suggestion of sin is not, and it cannot be evil ; because without any will on our part, and oftentimes in spite of our most vehement opposition, "evil will thrust its miscreated front athwart our way". But where there is no will to do evil, there cannot be any sin ; and this is particularly the case when evil is *discovered* in the mind, or rather in the imagination ; for the fact of its being *discovered*, is a sure sign that there has been no advertence of the intelligence to its entrance. The exception to this conclusion is, when evil does not come unbidden into our minds, but is voluntarily admitted and even invited to enter. We give this invitation, and throw open our doors, when we seek out objects which are calculated to give rise to evil thoughts. To do this, is not free from

guilt, for, if it leads us into the proximate occasion of sin, we have wilfully run the risk of being disloyal to God. This risk we are obliged to avoid, under penalty of sin; for by setting His ban upon sin, God has set His ban also upon those things that lead to it. Therefore, the guilt incurred by him who does not avoid these dangerous objects, must be measured by the gravity of the sin to which they expose him. If they lead to deadly sin, the gravity of the act by which he endangers his soul, is mortal; if they expose him to slight sins, the gravity of his act, is only light or venial.

After the suggestion of evil, the next stage in the progress of temptation, is a certain internal pleasure in the contemplation of the evil proposed. This pleasure is sometimes felt before any advertence of the intelligence to the presence of the evil; consequently, that pleasure being involuntary is not sinful.

If, after the advertence of the intelligence to the presence of evil, the will either assents to or desires the evil presented to its contemplation, we have the third stage of temptation, commonly called *consent*. This consent to evil may be given in various ways. The will may carry into execution the evil to which it has been tempted; without doing the evil, it may desire to do it; without either desiring or doing it, the will may not fully take pleasure in it; without doing, or desiring, or taking pleasure in it, the will may expose itself to the danger of being guilty of each of these acts. You will see, then, from what has been said, that sin does not consist in being tempted, nor in feeling the attraction of the sensitive appetite to it, but in giving to that attraction the consent of the will, or in exposing one's self to the proximate danger of giving that consent.

Now that the ground has been cleared for us, and we know precisely at what stage in the progress of temptation the soul is guilty of sin, we may next proceed to consider by what means we may be able most effectually to resist temptation.

Our blessed Lord prescribes for us two means by which we shall be able to prevent very many temptations, or to conquer those which, in spite of ourselves, come to trouble the repose

of our hearts. These means are vigilance and prayer : " Watch ye and pray, that you enter not into temptation ".¹ Vigilance or watchfulness consists in that general guardianship of ourselves, by which we prevent ourselves from ever giving rise to temptation. In spite of this custody of ourselves, we shall not always succeed in keeping it out of our hearts ; for it comes to us not only from our own natural inclination to evil, but from external causes over which we have not any control. The natural inclination to evil we always carry about with us, and hence, we are not always able to prevent the contests which take their rise from that source. But by prudent foresight we may hinder a great many of those which are caused by the external agency of the devil and the world. These two last-named enemies make use of the created things that surround us, to stir up our sensitive appetite and make it revolt against our reason and the law of God. Consequently, by shutting out as far as possible these external objects, we shall succeed in avoiding the dangers threatening us from them.

As, then, it is through our bodily senses that evil impressions are carried to our souls, vigilance or watchfulness over them is for us of the last necessity. The eyes particularly must be guarded, that they may not fasten themselves upon objects which will fan into a flame the fire of concupiscence smouldering within us, and never completely extinguished till death has quenched for ever our spark of mortal life. The ears must be protected against words and discourses which flash upon the mirror of the imagination lascivious and dangerous pictures. The other senses must be shielded from the reception of sensations that would awaken the fierce passions slumbering in the heart. Besides these objects, there are persons and places that are a source of peril to us, exciting us to evil by generating desires that crave to be satisfied. All these must be avoided.

Now, as idleness whether of mind or of body is a condition most favourable for the growth of evil, that also must be shunned with all possible care. " It has taught much evil," says

¹ St. Mark xiv. 38.

the Sacred Scripture ; "it is an enemy of the soul," says our holy Father St. Benedict ; therefore, as being a teacher of evil and an enemy of the soul, it must be kept at arm's length. If it should ever enthrall us and lay hold of our faculties of mind or of body, we shall straightway be assaulted by a crowd of evil thoughts and desires, and be most grievously troubled by the rebellion of our senses. For, as the Saints tell us, a busy man is attacked by only one devil, but an idle man, though unmolested by external foes, is oftentimes his own tempter, his own most formidable enemy. Vigilance, therefore, consists in guarding the senses of the body, and in keeping both body and mind well occupied in useful labour.

However, as we have already said, temptation will assail us, no matter how carefully we may watch over ourselves, no matter how busily we may be occupied. Therefore, when attacked by evil thought, or desire, or impression, we must treat each of them as we treat a spark of fire which has fallen upon our hand or upon our clothes. We shake it off the moment that we feel its smart, or that we perceive the part of our dress upon which it has fallen. If we do not, either we are burnt, or our garments are spoiled. Again ; we must deal with temptations as we deal with robbers who have effected an entrance into our houses. We call for help, we arm ourselves, and we succeed in ejecting them. The great point to be aimed at, in these circumstances, is never to allow a temptation to lay hold of us. This is St. Paul's advice : "Let no temptation lay hold of you". If it does, the difficulty of shaking ourselves free is very great ; and the danger to be apprehended is, that having fastened upon us, it will win the consent of the will. Therefore, vigilance to keep these hellish robbers out of our hearts, or, if they have effected an entrance, to hurl them forth before they can do us any mischief.

Vigilance, however, will not be of much service, if it be separated from the other means prescribed by Our Lord. This is prayer. Prayer is our cry for help, when we perceive that the robbers have entered. It is our weapon of defence before which they will beat a hasty and ignominious retreat. Prayer, then, is necessary for securing victory over these our

enemies. For of ourselves we can do no good ; we cannot resist temptations. Our Lord Himself tells us that without Him, without the aid of His divine grace, we can do nothing. But prayer is the channel by which grace is conveyed to our souls. It is also the condition on which grace is bestowed : " Ask, and you shall receive ". Our asking, that is to say our prayer, causes us to confess over and over again our own nothingness and weakness. More than this, it makes us both see and feel it ; and when we both see and feel how utterly powerless we are to cope with our adversaries, we send up that prayer with the strong cry of our heart, trusting only in God. That prayer pierces the clouds ; it presents itself before the throne of mercy ; it departs not thence till it is able to carry with it, for our assistance, the might of God to sweep aside the enemies swarming around us, and threatening us with destruction. We may be quite sure that this will be the result of our prayer. Also, that the defeat inflicted by it upon our relentless foes, will not be final and decisive. They will retire and leave us, but it will be only for a time. They will hover round watching for an opportunity to swoop down upon us. Hence the necessity for frequent prayer, for what we may call, continual prayer. Prayer, while we are left at peace, is a preparation for the fight ; prayer, during our contest will ensure victory ; and prayer, after the victory has been won, will be the seed of future triumphs. Therefore, as the struggle will end only with our last breath, we must pray till that last breath ; it must be expended in prayer. He that prays will never be lost.

We have considered, then, the various stages by which the devil, the world, and the flesh entice the unwary soul from the service of God. There is first, the suggestion of evil ; then, the delectation caused by that which to us wears the appearance of good, though in reality it is a deadly evil ; lastly, there is the consent of the will. From what has been said, you see perfectly well that in the mere suggestion to evil, there is no sin ; nor in the delectation arising from the object suggested, unless in the circumstances already detailed ; and, that sin is committed only when the will gives its consent. Now, the

will being a blind power, cannot exercise its faculty of assenting to any proposition, or of dissenting from it, till it is enlightened by the intelligence ; therefore, without the advertence of the intelligence and the consent of the will, there can be no sin, no matter how fierce may be the revolt of the senses. This principle, kept well in view, will preserve you from the worry of scruples. Therefore, hold fast to it ; use the means put into your hands by God for defeating the devil ; be on your guard ; watch and pray, and your enemies will never triumph in your defeat.

“DELIVER US FROM EVIL.”

IN the Holy Mass, when the priest has recited the Lord's Prayer, asking God to give honour to His holy name, to establish His kingdom in all hearts, to cause His will to be accomplished, to feed us with material and with spiritual food, to forgive us our iniquities, and never to suffer us to be tempted beyond our strength, the people are instructed to ask God to deliver them from evil. The Church then directs the priest to go on with his prayer, amplifying the response which the faithful have made, and beseeching God to deliver us from all past evils, from all present evils, and from all evils that may threaten us in the future. Now, the evil from which he prays God to deliver us, may afflict either our bodies or our souls, and, therefore, we may divide it into corporeal evil afflicting the body, and spiritual evil afflicting the soul. Let us, then, consider in what sense we ask to be delivered from both these kinds of evil.

Evil that afflicts the body, and through the body, the soul also, is anything that causes us unhappiness, that generates suffering, that brings upon us misfortune, or that works us harm. Among the ills thus beating down upon us like a storm of hail, are poverty, which brings in its train hunger, cold, and nakedness ; pain, which racks our delicate organism with torture more or less acute ; and sickness, which chains us down upon an uneasy couch. All these touch us in a direct way, without the intervention of any other agency, whereas

other ills affect us in an indirect manner, inasmuch as they first strike others, and in their recoil, fall upon us. Thus, when mighty earthquakes shake down great cities and carry either death or ruin to thousands ; when war devastates vast tracts of country ; or pestilence shoots the arrows of death among a crowded population ; or storms, sudden and fierce, sweep down upon and destroy the patiently acquired property of large communities, the pernicious effects resulting from these various ills reach very many others who are far removed from the immediate vicinity of their action. All these are evils afflicting the body, and from them we humbly pray to be delivered.

But in what sense is this petition made? Do we beseech God altogether to ward off these ills from us, and never suffer us to be touched by them? No; that is not its meaning, for such a prayer asking complete immunity from suffering would be in direct opposition to the spirit of the Gospel, which does not regard suffering as an unmitigated evil. Not that God delights in witnessing His creatures' pain, but that He is pleased in seeing them endure it in the spirit of Christ ; for it is of those that suffer in this way that Our Lord has said : “Blessed are they that mourn”. Owing to our position in this world, as sinners who have painfully to work their way back to the height whence they have fallen, it is absolutely impossible to be altogether free from corporeal evils. That state is reserved for the life to come. The present is one of trial, and, therefore, of suffering through which rest and happiness are to be won ; for, by uniting that suffering with the expiation made for us by Christ, we are enabled in some sort to satisfy for our sins.

But suffering does something more than this ; for it so beats down the pride and the animal instincts of the body, as to be a powerful factor in keeping the body in due subjection to reason and to the law of God. Not only does it thus prevent us from falling into sin, but it enables us to practise many virtues, such as patience, submission to the will of God, humility, resignation, and the like. Therefore, in asking God to deliver us from corporeal or bodily ills, the first intent of our

petition is, that we should be preserved only from evils which would be more than we could bear ; for, if they were beyond our strength we might, by our want of resignation, our murmuring, and our impatience, fall into sin and be displeasing to God. As, then, you see that these bodily ills, if endured in the spirit of Christ, are the germs of inestimable good, you must not ask to be delivered from them, for, by so doing you would be asking God to withhold from you good which will enrich you with merit, and store up for you in heaven an exceeding great weight of eternal glory.

Of course, it is but natural that we should prefer what the generality of men regard as the good things of this world. We should prefer to be wealthy, so as to be able to satisfy all our wants ; to enjoy the blessing of unimpaired health ; to be held in high esteem by our fellow-men ; never to suffer from their malice ; always to be shielded from the calamities which fill with mourning and with bitter tears the homes of even the most highly favoured. But are these advantages always blessings to those unto whom they are granted ? Not so ! To very many, nay, to most men, they are sometimes evils which lead to endless ill. Wealth, honour, esteem, health, not unfrequently separate men from the friendship of God. In the eyes of a wise man, this is assuredly the greatest evil. Therefore, when we say to God, "Deliver us from evil," we ask Him to take away from us even those things which in the esteem of men are reputed good, if He, in His infinite wisdom, should see that they will lead us into this terrible misfortune. As a matter of fact, sin alone excepted, all things else may be for our good. Consequently, the only real evil from which, without any condition, we may ask to be delivered, is the evil of offending God, and by so doing, of losing our right to the possession of Him and of eternal life.

The spiritual evils directly affecting our souls, arise from sin as do our corporeal ills. Sin, that is to say original sin, has wounded our soul, just as a grave illness would wound our body. Its effects are felt in the intelligence and in the will. It has enveloped the intelligence in the pall of ignorance, and

has thrown over the will the spell of concupiscence which entrals it in evil. By wrapping the intelligence in the folds of ignorance, sin excludes from it the divine light which would otherwise pour into our soul its heavenly beams, and enable it easily to discriminate between good and evil. Illumined by this resplendent light, the soul would have no difficulty in recognising its duties to God ; it would never mistake evil for good ; it would see, at a glance, the worth of what is really important, and detect the vileness of what the world invests with a fictitious value.

Besides darkening the intelligence, sin has inflicted upon the will a wound which has engendered in it concupiscence, that is to say, has made it strongly inclined to evil, and very averse to good, so that it loves the evil which its natural rectitude would cause it to detest, and turns away almost with loathing from the good to which it ought to adhere.

From these two wounds the soul is filled with unrest. It feels disgust for the pursuit of virtue and the love of God ; it wearies of the sameness of God's house ; it shrinks from the difficulties of holy living ; and, as a natural consequence of its pusillanimity, it is tortured by scruples, tormented by the suggestions of the evil one, and made the sport of his illusions.

These are evils from which we ought with our whole soul to pray to be free ; for, they may be unto us the fruitful sources of many grave sins. If we be in earnest in our petition, God will hear us and will free us—but not absolutely. For these evils have their good side, and from that we must not ask nor wish to be delivered. What is this good side ? It is their beneficial effect upon us. When we look upon these evils, and consider how easily we are overcome by them, that fact serves to keep us humble. With the help of divine grace, we are able to fight against them, and that resistance makes us strong and virtuous. Therefore, our prayer with regard to these spiritual ills should be, that God would diminish their violence and give us strength to resist them, and by resisting them to enrich ourselves with vast stores of merit. It is our weakness that we ask to be strengthened in order that we may never fail, and that when life's

brief day is closing in, we may be found still bravely fighting against our enemies. It is not an unbroken peace for which we crave, but only victory over our inveterate foes.

If, then, these evils are in reality for our good, we need not feel any surprise if that which most men regard as immensely good, should turn out to be in reality for us positive evils. To be always abounding in joy, is a good thing. To have wealth at our command, is also a good thing. To be strong and healthy, never experiencing the burden which painful maladies impose, is also undoubtedly to be esteemed a great blessing. But are these worldly good things always a blessing unto those who possess them? Experience does not prove that they are. Nay, Our Lord does not congratulate those who enjoy these blessings. It is to the mournful, to the poor in spirit, to the sorrowful, to the heavily burdened, to the persecuted, that He promises spiritual health, wealth, and joy that will never end. For, worldly joy not unfrequently separates the heart from Him; wealth weans its affections from Him, and fastens them upon transitory things; while the soul that knows not the smart of affliction, is apt to forget that it has not here below a lasting city.

In praying, then, to be delivered from evils, we ask God to strip us of these things, if they are likely to turn us away from Him, and by turning us away from Him, our true good, to become for us positive evils. Consequently, we ought to regard those things which the world considers to be unmitigated evils, as good things in disguise, sent to us from the treasury of God. In this respect, we should imitate holy Job, who said of these worldly goods: "The Lord hath given them, and the Lord hath taken them away". To the eyes of men without faith, the withdrawal of them seemed to be a positive evil; but to his eyes, illuminated by the light of God's countenance, it seemed to be a blessing. Therefore, in asking to be delivered from evil, we pray God to take away from us even those things which men regard as good, if they should turn out to be for us a curse instead of a blessing. The immediate cause or instrument of their withdrawal may be the malice of men, but after all it is God that makes use of it

for our sanctification, by drawing good out of what they intended to be evil. But while counselling you in all adversities to look upon God as the author of them, we do not wish you to think that He would not have you use every effort to avert these ills. You both may, and you ought to do your utmost to ward them from yourself; but having done your utmost to avert them, you must, if they fall upon you, humbly submit to the will of God.

It is with these sentiments, then, that you ought to repeat the concluding words of this divine prayer: “Deliver us from evil”. No one can say these words with the proper dispositions, unless he has a heart that is profoundly Christian, full of desires for God’s glory, of earnest longings for the joys of heaven, and for the accomplishment of the divine will. Strive, then, to fill your heart with these sentiments, and it will pray to be delivered from that which is really evil, and from that which, though good in our eyes, would yet be for us a positive evil. Offer the petition to God, with an upright heart, strong in faith. God will hear your prayer and grant your request. You will be delivered from evil and from everything that, under the specious appearance of being good, would deceive you.

“THE HAIL MARY.”

Part I.

IMMEDIATELY after the recitation of the “Our Father,” there is always added by Catholics, a short prayer called the “Angelical Salutation,” or the “Hail Mary,” so styled because of the words by which it is begun. This prayer is composed of the words which the Angel addressed to our Lady, at the Annunciation; of the words with which St. Elizabeth saluted her, when the Virgin went to visit her; and of the words in which the Church calls for her powerful advocacy both during the trials of this life, and at the dread moment when life is about to end. In a certain sense, then, we may say of this prayer what is said of the “Our Father,” that it is of divine origin. For the Angel

being God's ambassador, addressed to our Lady only words entrusted to him by God Himself; St. Elizabeth, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, spoke the words assigned to her; and the Church, guided by that same Holy Spirit, uttered the petition for Mary's advocacy in the dangers of life and in the agony of death. Coming as it always does after the "Our Father," we may regard it as having been designedly so placed, in order that by calling upon the Virgin Mother to use her advocacy with God, we may be able the more easily to obtain all the graces for which we ask in the Lord's Prayer. But though this may be a motive for having placed it in that position, the chief reasons animating the Church so strongly to recommend to us the Angelical Salutation are, to thank the Divine Word for taking upon Himself our human nature, to give homage to His Virgin Mother, and to obtain her patronage and her powerful intercession.

Therefore, in order to fill your hearts with a high esteem of this familiar prayer, let me address to you a few explanatory words which will enable you, in future, more intelligently and devoutly to recite it.

It is worthy of remark that the Angel, on presenting himself before the humble Virgin, speaks to her words of most reverential salutation. He says to her: "Hail, full of grace". In the whole Bible History, this is the only instance in which an angelic messenger has thus testified veneration for a human creature. Their usual method of dealing with men, is to speak with the voice of authority, saying: "Thus saith the Lord". But mindful of the exalted dignity so soon to be conferred on Mary, he utters these words of reverential salutation: "Hail, full of grace". Now, grace is a most precious gift of God, conferring upon the soul a beauty so transcendent, that if with the eyes of our body we could perceive it, we should deem the person endowed with it to be a god. It confers upon it not only beauty, but the capability of doing that which of its own native strength it would be impossible for it to accomplish. Given by God to His creatures, it endows them with all the requisites for carrying out His divine will.

But though poured out upon them with lavish liberality,

it is not given in the same measure to all; some receive more, and others less, according to the good pleasure of Our almighty Benefactor, as we plainly see in the Parable of the talents. When, therefore, we hear the Angel styling our Lady "*full of grace*," we gather from his words that he regards her as the holiest of God's creatures, enriched with each and all the gifts necessary for the accomplishment of her high office. That she really was what he styled her, may be deduced from the fact that being the ambassador of God, he spoke only the words which the Lord had commissioned him to utter, and thereby made evident to us what were God's own ideas concerning her. He calls her "*full of grace*".

Other Saints, as we learn from the Holy Scripture, are said to have been similarly dowered, and, therefore, some persons may be inclined to think that there is nothing extraordinary in the fact that this epithet has been applied to the holy Virgin, since the deacon Stephen, the saintly Elizabeth, and the austere Baptist are said to have been full of the Holy Spirit. But we may be permitted to observe that there is a fulness and a fulness. A lake is said to be full; so also is a river; yet their fulness is as nothing when compared with the fulness of the great ocean. Such is Mary's fulness of grace when compared with that of the other Saints of God. For, if we would measure the length, the breadth, the height, and the depth of grace, there are at hand certain standards by which we may attempt to accomplish this task.

Exemption from sin is one of these; interior supernatural habits is another; and excellence of the good works performed is another. On examining each of these standards furnished by spiritual writers, we find that they place our Blessed Lady upon a height far beyond that attained by any other of the great servants of God. The Church has defined: "that by the grace of God, and in virtue of the Passion and death of Christ, she was preserved from the stain of original sin". Of actual sin, whether great or small, St. Augustine says that there can be no question when speaking of her. Therefore, being exempt from the one and from the other, there were taken away from her all the sources of sin, and

consequently, there was in her soul and in her chaste body no incitement to sin. Her flesh was as submissive to the law of God as her spirit was subject to His divine will. Measured, then, by the standard of sinlessness, Mary may with truth be said to have surpassed all the other Saints in spotless purity, and, therefore, to have been, in the words of the Angel, "full of grace".

What is the next consequence that we draw from this? It is that the Godhead infused into her soul all those supernatural habits that constitute the most exalted sanctity. Sanctifying grace filled her soul; there were poured into it, in the largest measure that it is possible for a creature to have them, the great theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, together with all the moral virtues. In addition to these, she possessed in their full measure all those gifts of grace named by theologians "gratuitously given," such as the Apostles received at Pentecost. In their company she sat in that upper chamber in Jerusalem, when the mighty wind seized upon the four corners of the house, when the fiery tongues rested over each of the heads of those present, and when all were filled with the Holy Ghost. Therefore, like them, that Spirit of love, endowed her with the gift of prophecy, filled her with heavenly knowledge, and gave her power to speak with divers tongues. Like them she had the gift of miracles, and the grace of healing all manner of diseases. In this sense also, Mary may truly be said to be "full of grace".

Examine now the meritorious actions of one so endowed, and they will furnish the third standard by which we are able to measure her sanctity, and to say with the Angel: "Hail, full of grace".

What does her whole life put before us but one unbroken series of the most meritorious acts of exalted virtue? By what are the actions of any holy life made perfect? After the grace of God, which enables any one to perform an act of virtue, it is by the purity of intention with which such acts are accomplished, by the fervour and the love with which they are animated. In all her actions, Mary sought only the glory of Him Who was at once her child and her God. What

ardour, what fervour would not the ever-present consciousness of this fact breathe into everything that she did for Him? Who else, then, could love Him as she loved Him? Consequently, every moment of her life must have been a correspondence with grace, and that correspondence, as we know so well, brings with it an influx of other graces, so that moment by moment she advanced in sanctity, thus making her fulness of grace increase in worth and in merit.

Another reason which will help to bring out more clearly before our minds the fulness of grace in our Lady, may be drawn from that axiom which is laid down by theologians, namely, “that God always proportions His graces and favours to the dignity of the office for which He destines any of His creatures”.

To the leaders of His people, He gave wisdom in council and valour in battle; to His Prophets, a clear insight into the future; to His Apostles, all those marvellous gifts of which we see so many and so manifest proofs in the Book of the Acts. Now, if we take this axiom as a standard of Mary's graces, judge what they must have been! What office of king, or prophet, or Apostle was comparable with hers? She was not to rule a people or a nation, but to have under her authority the Incarnate God. She was not simply to prophesy, but to have the care of the oracle of God. She was not to convert the world, but to be the Mother of Him Who sent forth the heralds of the Gospel, she was, in one word, to be the Mother of God. This is an office immeasurably surpassing in dignity any that was ever held by mortal man. God chose her from among all the generations of Adam, to hold that office. He gave it to her, and having given it, He must have endowed her with all the graces necessary for its fulfilment. If, then, she could be styled “full of grace,” before God had conferred upon her this high commission, how immeasurably must that store have been increased when the Almighty became bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh? What must it have become, when she daily held Him in her arms, and carried Him in her bosom? What, when she had Him with her to converse with, and to learn from, during the space of

thirty years? With truth, then, did the Angel on the part of God say to her: "Hail, full of grace".

Having in these words made known to us the magnitude of her sanctity, he next gives utterance to expressions which confirm what he had already said, for he adds: "The Lord is with thee". In these words the Angel does not speak of that union which exists between God and every soul that is in the state of grace, but of the Incarnation which by anticipation he regards as already an accomplished fact. By that fact the union, or the actual presence within her of God, was the closest, the most intimate that it is possible to conceive as existing between God and His creature—to be part and parcel of her substance, to be living within her, breathing with her breath, and, if we may so speak, existing with her life. But even independently of this union, the Lord was in a very special manner present with our Lady, by reason of His good will towards her, His fatherly protection of her, and His most tender love for her. Being from her very conception immaculate, God was with her to preserve that spotlessness from all contact of evil. Moreover, all during her life He was with her, continually assisting, governing, directing, and defending, so that He was the principle of all her thoughts, the object of all her affections.

After having reverently saluted our Lady with the word "Hail" and announced to her the fact that the Lord God was most intimately united with her, the Angel next pronounces her "blessed among women," an announcement which the saintly Elizabeth re-echoed, when, on Mary's salutation sounding in her ears, the Holy Spirit endowed her with wondrous grace, and opened her mouth to speak words of prophecy. By these words the Angel intimated to her that upon her God had conferred a distinction which lifted her high above all other creatures. They referred not only to the marvels of divine grace which had already been wrought in her, but to the astounding miracle presently to be wrought in her person, when the Eternal Word was to descend into her bosom, and take from her that human nature which He was afterwards to sacrifice for the redemption of the world. It is for this

reason that he particularly proclaims her “ blessed among women ”. The Incarnation of the Divine Word flooded her soul with graces. It procured for her the special assistance of God, and caused Him to hold over her the shield of His protecting wings. She became a mother, and yet remained a virgin, the Mother of God, the Virgin of virgins, thus uniting in her own person all that is most excellent and meritorious.

“ Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee ! Blessed art thou among women ! ” How pleasing must it be to our dearest Mother to hear from the lips of her children these words which recall to her mind her greatest privilege, and the thrill of ecstatic joy which flooded her soul with the happiness of heaven, when ages ago she heard them for the first time as they fell from the Archangel’s lips ! These words which are so often upon our lips, and are, alas ! so often hurriedly pronounced, should be often pondered upon in reverent meditation. Then their hidden meaning would flash forth, and fill our hearts with the sentiments which they never fail to engender in the souls of those who give to them heedful note. What profound admiration will they not beget in us for that privileged daughter of Adam, for that highly favoured one whom the King of kings delighteth to honour ! How full of the deepest gratitude will they make our hearts for the priceless boon conferred upon us by the Incarnation of the Eternal God, Who thus deigned to make Himself our brother, and gave to us for our Mother, that Queen of the heavenly hosts ! Can God refuse us any grace or any favour if she joins her powerful intercession to our feeble prayer ? Surely He will stretch forth His sceptre to her, and grant to her all that she asks. Therefore, pray to her to intercede for you with her Divine Son for pardon of all past offences, for grace never to repeat them, and for strength to remain constant, unwavering in His friendship and service.

“THE HAIL MARY.”

Part II.

WE have now to consider the second part of the Angelical Salutation which consists of two distinct portions—the one spoken by St. Elizabeth under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the other addressed to the Virgin Mother by the Church of God, guided and instructed by that same Divine Spirit.

In order thoroughly to understand the few words uttered by the saintly cousin of our Blessed Lady, it will be necessary to recall the events which had happened to this chosen vessel of election and to her holy husband, only a few months before the occasion which drew them from her lips. The time had come when the “expected of all nations,” clothed in mortal flesh, was to appear in the world which His hands had made. It was, therefore, necessary that His precursor or forerunner, as had been foretold, should present himself before men, and begin his mission of preparing the way before the face of the great Liberator. Accordingly, an Angel of the Lord was sent to Zachary, the priest, who had gone up to Jerusalem to perform, in the order of his course, the functions of his office. Both he and his wife were now advanced in years, and their union thus far had not been blessed with any issue. Little, therefore, did he think when he set out to accomplish his sacerdotal duties, that the moment had arrived when God would satisfy the longings of his heart. But so it was to be, for nothing is impossible with God.

He went, then, as usual to the Temple, and, clad in his priestly vestments, entered the Sanctuary to burn incense before the Lord, while the people remained without, engaged in prayer. But now, a glorious spectacle met his view. He beheld, standing at the right side of the altar, the resplendent figure of an Angel, who, seeing the trepidation of the holy priest, spoke to him and said: “Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John”. Though these

words filled him with a flood of joy, yet his mind was in doubt how so great a marvel could be wrought. In his eyes it seemed to be an impossibility, and giving utterance to his incredulity, he asked, like many another, for some sure token which should sweep aside all doubtful misgivings : “Whereby,” he asked, “shall I know this, for I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years?” The Angel gave him a sign, which was at the same time a punishment for his doubt concerning the power of the Omnipotent. “Behold,” said the Angel, “thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day when these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words which shall be fulfilled in their time.” Having by this answer deprived Zachary of the power of speech, the bright Angel vanished from his sight.

Meanwhile, the people praying without, were filled with wonder because Zachary yet remained within the precincts of the holy place. Their hearts were, therefore, longing to know the reason of his unwonted delay. As soon, then, as the priest came into their presence, and they perceived by his agitation and by his inability to speak, that something unusual had happened, they were given by him, through signs, to understand that he had been favoured with a vision, and full of reverential wonder they went back to their homes.

Zachary, also, when the days of his ministry were ended, returned to his home, and his wife Elizabeth, as the Angel had foretold, conceived and hid herself from the public gaze. Six months had now elapsed since that memorable day. Then God sent His Angel to Nazareth to announce to the spotless Virgin that the moment for the Incarnation of the Word had arrived, and that all heaven awaited her consent before the great mystery could be accomplished. To prove to her that nothing is impossible with God, the Angel informed her that her cousin St. Elizabeth had conceived, and that this was now the sixth month with her who had been called “the barren one”. Mary having humbly assented to the will of heaven, and having thereby been made the Mother of God, arose in haste, impelled by the fire of the Holy Ghost, and went to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

Entering the house of Zachary, she saluted Elizabeth, and as Mary's words fell upon the ear of her saintly relative, the yet unborn Baptist was filled with exultation, and his joyful mother with the Holy Ghost. Whereupon, crying out with a loud voice, Elizabeth by her greeting, brought back to the ears of Mary the very words that had fallen from the Angel's lips, when he said: "Blessed art thou among women!" adding to it the words, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb". Then reflecting upon the honour done to her by this gracious visit, she exclaimed: "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to visit me?" for, at that moment had been made to her the revelation of the great mystery of the Incarnation, and she, as it were, then struck the note on which the anthem of Mary's greatness should ever afterwards be sung.

The sentiments of his mother Elizabeth seem to have penetrated the bosom of the future Baptist, as he lay imprisoned in her womb; for when in after years he beheld the Incarnate God coming towards him, to bend beneath his hand for the reception of the waters of baptism, these sentiments found expression in almost similar words of deep humility, as if the echo of them had kept ever reverberating in the cells of his memory: "I ought to go to Thee, and comest Thou to me?"

The Church, catching up these words of Elizabeth, words which made so deep an impression on the mind of the Baptist, and guided by the same Holy Spirit that inspired her to give them utterance, addresses Mary with the sublime title: "Mother of God"—"Holy Mary, Mother of God! pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death". That she is the Mother of God has always been the belief of the Church; but on this title the Church solemnly and publicly set her seal of faith at the Council of Ephesus, held in A.D. 431. Pope Celestine called together the Fathers who composed that Council, and over them St. Cyril of Alexandria presided in the Pope's name. The chief object for which Christ's Vicar assembled them, was to condemn the detestable heresy of Nestorius, who had disturbed the Eastern Church by his false

teaching. He maintained that in Christ there are two persons, the person of man and the person of God. Christ, he considered to be a mere man, to whom the Word had joined Himself. A consequence of his doctrine would be, that our Lady is the mother of only a singularly favoured human being, and not the mother of the Incarnate God.

The Council, after thoroughly examining into the matter, and into the belief of preceding ages, declared it to be of divine faith that the Virgin Mother had brought forth the Incarnate God, and therefore, that she is truly the Mother of God. For, by the infinite power of God, the humanity of Jesus Christ was fashioned out of the substance of Mary's virginal flesh, and, simultaneously with the instant of its creation, was assumed unto Himself by the uncreated Word. As then the human nature of that Divine Word had never, for a single instant, existed independently of and apart from the Word, it never had a separate personality of its own. Now the Being that was born of the Virgin was this one Person, the Person of the God-man, Christ Jesus. If He is God, as the Church teaches that He is, then Mary is His Mother. She is not the Mother of His Divinity, but of His humanity, with which His Divinity is hypostatically, that is to say personally, united. If then earthly mothers are truly and really the mothers of the children whom they bring into the world, though they do not give to them their immortal souls, which are the immediate creation of God, so also with equal truth and with equal reality is Mary styled the Mother of the God-man. Yet it is the soul that gives “personality” to each of us, just as it is the Divine Word that gives its personality to the Man Christ.

If, then, our mothers, though not conceiving the soul which, together with our human flesh constitutes our human personality, are nevertheless truly the mothers of the personalities whom they bring forth, so also is the Blessed Virgin the Mother of God, that is to say of the personality Whom she brought into the world.

Now, if the dignity of a son throws the reflection of its splendour upon the mother who bore him, what shall we say of

the dignity with which God has invested the spotless Virgin? We cannot exaggerate it by any effort of human speech, for it is, in a certain sense, infinite. The dignity of Jesus Christ is an infinite dignity, and, therefore, the glory which it sheds upon His Mother is in some sort infinite also. The flesh to which the adorable person of the Word is united was taken from the Virgin; was of the substance of the Virgin; was the true, real flesh of the Virgin. By this fact, the Mother of Jesus has contracted a twofold bond of closest relationship—a bond of consanguinity with the Son of God made Man, and of affinity with the Godhead, inasmuch as a part of her corporeal substance is hypostatically united with the Divinity.

It is this fact, so feelingly realised by the divinely guided Church, that has caused her to address our Lady by this glorious title—"Mother of God". That title when applied to her name must make her most willing to listen to our prayers, and employ on our behalf her powerful intercession with her Son. He loved her as no other son has ever loved his mother. During His earthly career, He showed what a mighty influence over Him her prayer always exercised, for He complied with her wishes and wrought a miracle to please her, even before the time preordained by Him for the working of these marvels had arrived. What will He not be ready to do for her now that she is seated with Him in the kingdom of His glory? Hence the Fathers have not hesitated to say that, as Jesus is omnipotent by nature, He has made her omnipotent in her intercessory prayer. It is for this reason that the Church bids us ask her to pray for us during the days of our exile on earth. We are weak, we are full of imperfections, we are sinful, and, therefore, we must ask her to intercede for us with her Son. That intercession will procure for us help to overcome faults and defects, help to combat our passions, help to burst asunder the bonds with which they have hampered us, and to walk forth free. But it is particularly at the last moment of our mortal life that she bids us ask Mary to intercede for us. That is the moment of our supreme weakness both of body and of mind, the moment of our

deepest humiliation, when we need a mother's hand to soothe, and a mother's voice to comfort us.

Therefore, during the days of your health and strength, be earnest in using this beautiful, this heavenly prayer. It will procure for you countless graces, and the certain aid of that Mother whom Christ, when dying on the Cross, gave to you to be your Mother, to stand by your death-bed as she stood by His, to pillow your weary head upon her bosom, to whisper words of consolation into your ear when the painted scene of this life is about to be drawn aside, and the endless expanse of eternity is opening out before the eyes of your soul.

THE ANGELS.

IF we examine the works of God, we find in them a certain gradation of perfection, from the inert mass under our feet to the loftiest spiritual nature that stands before His awful throne. In the earth and the rocks, there is mere material existence; in the plants and the trees, vegetative life; in the animals, animal life; in man, animal life, glorified and perfected by an intellectual, immortal soul; lastly, in the purely spiritual beings, there is that spiritual nature which approaches nearest to the nature of the great God from Whose hands all these various creatures have sprung. These last-named spiritual beings are called Angels, a term which denotes their office rather than their nature; but that nature we know to be a created, spiritual substance, incorporeal, and subsisting by itself, inasmuch as it is not, like the human soul, destined to complete some inferior order of being.

Of the existence of this magnificent creation of God, we cannot for a moment doubt; for, to say nothing of the general belief of the human family both pagan and Christian, a belief based upon the common consent of mankind, there are in the Sacred Scripture and in the teaching of the Church proofs so clear, so convincing, that we cannot gainsay them without denying the faith. In the nineteenth chapter of Genesis, we read that two Angels were sent to save Lot and his family from the destruction impending over the city of Sodom. When

Abraham was about to immolate his son Isaac, when he had raised the sacrificial knife to strike the fatal blow, an Angel cried to him from heaven, and forbade him to slay the boy. Our Lord Himself, in St. Matthew's Gospel, assures us that the Guardian Angels of little children always see the face of His Father Who is in heaven. In these, and in many other parts of the Sacred Text, the existence of this angelic creation is so manifestly taught that, with St. Augustine, we are forced to say: "It is not lawful for us to doubt it". The Church has set the matter at rest by saying, in the Council of Lateran:¹ "From the very beginning, God created both a spiritual and a corporeal creature, that is to say, the angelic world, and the world of men, which latter world is of a nature, at one and the same time, spiritual and corporeal".

Therefore, while gladly accepting this truth taught us by the Scripture and by the authorised interpreter of Scripture—the Holy Catholic Church—let us gather together all that our beloved Mother puts before us for our acceptance concerning these first-born sons of God.

They are the first-born of God's almighty hand, being called into existence at the same time as the universe, neither before nor after its birth; for, in Genesis, in which the creation of God's external works is described, we read: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". Under the term "earth," is comprised all this visible creation which we see around us; and under the term "heavens," the invisible world of angelic Spirits. If further proof be necessary, it will be found in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus, in which the sacred writer says: "In six days the Lord made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things which are in them". If God made the heavens, then He must have made the Angels who inhabit them, for there, most probably, their creation took place. Thence, Our Lord said, that He beheld Satan falling like a lightning flash, not however from the heaven of the blessed, but from that lower heaven in which the Angels abode, until they had been tried by temptation and had been found worthy of eternal beatitude.

¹ Cap. *Firmiter*.

Into that higher heaven, the unhappy Archangel aspired to ascend and make himself equal to God, saying : “ I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north ”.¹

The nature bestowed upon them, in the moment of their creation, is essentially an immortal one ; for, as the being with which they were endowed by God is an immaterial one, having in it nothing that can be a principle of corruption, there is in it nothing that can be dissolved into parts, and thus cause it to perish. Yet they are not immortal as God is ; they are not from themselves ; they are the work of His hands, and, consequently, they could be destroyed by the same power that called them into being. The attribute of immortality being the result of the natural grace of creation, is by writers sometimes assigned to grace ; not, be it observed, to supernatural grace, but to the natural grace of creation, which is styled grace, because it is not due to the nature, since it is bestowed as a favour.

Being thus called into existence by God and endowed with immortality, these angelic Spirits have oftentimes assumed bodily shapes, and appeared among men to convey to them the orders of God, to do them services, and to manifest to them the attributes of their Almighty Master. Thus, in the Sacred Scriptures, we read of their visits to Abraham, Lot, Moses Tobias, and other eminent and saintly servants of God. Now, as St. Thomas² teaches, it is only a body, formed in some mysterious way by the compression of the air, that can be seen in such visions as were those with which these illustrious men were favoured ; but though clothed in bodily shapes, and apparently endowed with a human frame which spoke, acted, and made use of corporeal food, just as men are wont to do, yet there was not between these bodies and the angelic nature, a vital union such as is that existing between our soul and our body. They were united with these bodies only as a motive power is united with the things which are

¹ Isaias. xiv. 13.

² *De Angelis*, p. i., q. 51, a. 2.

moved, so that when they spoke, or ate, or did any other human action, they only appeared to eat, to speak, and to act as men would act, in similar circumstances. The reason given is, that an action is of the same nature as the power that produces it. Therefore, no being is able to perform human actions, unless it is endowed with human life, the principle whence human actions flow. Consequently, the Angels are incapable of executing the human acts which they apparently perform, since they live not with a human life which is the principle whence human actions proceed.

Among the offices intrusted to them, we mentioned that of manifesting unto men the attributes of the Godhead. This is an idea put forth by St. Augustine, who is of opinion that, with the exception of the Incarnation, by which God as man walked about among men, men have never been favoured with a glimpse of His person. According to this great doctor, all these manifestations of Himself made by God to the Patriarchs and the Saints of old, were not really visions of God ; they were visions of Him effected by the ministry of Angels. The Sacred Scripture seems to favour this view ; for St. Stephen, when speaking before the Council, said : "It was an Angel that on Mount Sinai spoke with Moses" ; and farther on in his discourse, he reproaches his hearers for having received the law "by the disposition of Angels, and for not having kept it". This is the more probable, if we bear in mind that Angels are called gods, inasmuch as they represent the person of God.

From what we have already said of the place in which Almighty God created the Angels, you will be prepared to hear that He called them into being, in a state of only natural, and not of supernatural beatitude. The state of natural beatitude, consisting as it does in the absence of all misery, which is the penalty of sin, must have been that in which these angelic Spirits were created. But the state of supernatural beatitude, consisting in the intuitive vision of God, a vision implying confirmation and stability in good, was that to which those among them who resisted temptation were raised as a reward for their victory. But even in the state of simple,

natural beatitude, they were adorned with sanctifying grace, as is evident from these words of the Prophet Ezechiel,¹ words which, though applied by him to the King of Tyre, have always been understood by the Fathers, as setting forth the privileges of the Angels, before their unhappy fall : “ Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day of thy creation, until iniquity was found in thee ”. Hence we may conclude that, by their sin, they lost not their natural perfection, but only their supernatural perfection, which consists in sanctifying grace.

From the fact of having said that the Angels were created “in heaven,” you will probably ask : “ Are, then, these spiritual beings in a definite place ? ” To this question, we unhesitatingly give an affirmative reply ; but, though so doing, we do not mean to say that they are circumscribed by it, so as to correspond to the various parts of the place. This circumscription cannot be predicated of a Spirit, but only of that which has parts. All that we mean is, that they are definitively in a place, so as not to be elsewhere. Yet, though definitively in a place, they have the power to move from it, and to go whithersoever it is the will of God that they should betake themselves. Hence, from St. Luke’s Gospel, we learn that the Angel Gabriel was *sent* from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin. . . . And the Angel being *come* in, said : “ Hail, full of grace. . . . And the Angel *departed* from her.” Also we read, that when the Angels who announced to the shepherds the glad tidings of the Saviour’s birth had fulfilled their mission, “ they *departed* from them into heaven ”.² By these words we are given to understand that they left one place to go to another, a proceeding which implies locomotion.

Besides this power, they have another which is also made manifest to us by the words of the Scripture. This is the power of moving bodies ; for, of the Prophet Habacuc, we learn that an Angel carried him from Judea into Babylon, to refresh the Prophet Daniel who lay in the lions’ den.

That they can communicate with one another, is also clearly

¹ Chap. xxviii. 15.

² St. Luke i. 26-38 ; ii. 15.

proved by Holy Writ ; for, Isaias says : “ Two Seraphim cried to each other : ‘ Holy, Holy, Holy ! ’ ” and St. Jude represents the Archangel Michael as disputing with the devil and saying : “ May God rebuke thee ! ” But though holding communication with one another, we must not suppose that this is done by means of articulate speech. Of this *we* have need to make manifest to our fellow-men the concepts of our minds. But the Angels, being pure intelligences, have need of nothing more, as St. Thomas¹ explains, than to direct their intelligences and their wills to one another, in order to let their thoughts be evident, and by not so doing, they conceal them.

Of the knowledge with which they are endowed, it is needless to state that, in the first place, they know themselves, and then one another ; all natural causes lie open before their minds, and also all future necessary events ; but as for future events which happen from natural causes, these they can know only from conjecture. Such events and actions as depend upon the free will of men, they cannot know. Only God Himself, the Omniscient, peers with His all-seeing eyes into these, for, as it is said in Scripture : “ Thou only, knowest the hearts of the children of men ”.² Hence we may console ourselves by the reflection that if our free thoughts are not known to these benignant Spirits, who in our regard are so full of the most ardent love, with much greater reason are they hidden from those fallen Spirits who are intent only upon our eternal ruin. Yet, even these may, by means of that natural sagacity which they have not lost by their fall, conjecture what is passing in our minds from the effects which these thoughts produce in our bodily frame. But though the Angels cannot see our free and secret thoughts, they may, by contemplating God, be cognisant of the good and virtuous actions which in our inmost soul we perform through the aid of His divine grace.

Having incidentally mentioned the fallen Angels, you will naturally ask of what nature was the sin which cast them out of heaven. This is generally supposed to have been a sin of

¹ *De Angelis*, q. 107, a. 1.

² *Paral.* vi. 30.

pride ; for, speaking of evil, and cautioning his son against it, Tobias¹ said : " From pride, all perdition took its beginning " ; and Isaias,² speaking of Satan under the name of the King of Babylon, says : " Thy pride is brought down to hell. . . . How art thou fallen from heaven, Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning. . . . Thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven. . . . I will be like the Most High." It is thought that the end or object of this pride was a desire to be equal to God, not absolutely equal, but conditionally, that is to say, if it were possible. By taking pleasure in this desire, Satan and his followers sinned. That desire hurled from the heavenly courts Angels of every hierarchy in the kingdom of God ; for, among the enemies of our salvation St. Paul enumerates : " Angels, and Principalities, and Powers ".³ " His tail," says St. John, speaking of Lucifer, " drew [after him] the third part of the stars of heaven," that is to say, the Angels, " and cast them to the earth."⁴

That terrible sin, besides depriving them of heaven, struck them with blindness of mind, and with obstinacy of will in evil. It thrust them forth from glory, and imprisoned them in the fire of hell. There, in that fallen state, they are deprived of their supernatural, but not of their natural light or intelligence ; for supernatural light being a certain ordinance or directing power unto eternal life, of this they are stripped, since they cannot have that unto which it directs the just. Therefore, in Ezechiel, it is written : " I cast thee out from the mountain of God, and destroyed thee, O covering Cherub, out of the midst of the stones of fire. And thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty : thou hast lost thy wisdom and thy beauty, I have cast thee to the ground."⁵ That they are not deprived of their natural light or intelligence will be evident, if we bear in mind that the intellect, as far as the grasping of natural truths is concerned, is not impaired or diminished, unless the nature itself of the being whose faculty it is, is impaired or diminished. But by their sin the nature of the Angels

¹ Tobias. iv. 14.

² Isaias. xiv. 11.

³ Rom. viii. 38.

⁴ Apocal. xii. 4.

⁵ xxviii. 16.

was not impaired or diminished ; consequently, their intellect remains just what it was before their fall, that is to say, as far as natural things are concerned.

This then, in a general sort of way, is what we have to tell you of the angelic part of God's creation, that purely spiritual world created in a state of natural beatitude, and after a suitable trial, firmly fixed in supernatural felicity. They are of a higher order than we are, endowed with an indefinitely superior degree of intelligence, and more abundantly favoured with divine gifts and graces. Like ourselves, they had their period of probation, in which they were tested, to see whether they were worthy of that eternal felicity for which God destined them. Like ourselves, also, some of them proved unfaithful and fell away from their Creator, while others came forth from the trial, victorious. Both stand before us, as a warning and as an encouragement. If we adhere to sin rather than to God, we shall lose that glorious kingdom which awaits us as our rightful inheritance. If we be faithful in our allegiance to God, we shall be raised to a share in the happiness which the good Angels enjoy. As the rebellious Angels fell by pride, so may we. Therefore, let us guard ourselves well against that subtle passion which is the root of all other evil. If we crush that, we shall easily prevent the growth of the many evils which spring from it, and after imitating, in their constancy, those glorious Spirits who remained faithful to God, we shall be called to share with them the happiness with which He has crowned them in His heavenly kingdom.

THE ANGEL GUARDIANS.

IN the angelic world, as in all the other works of God, there is a wonderful order, and due subjection of power to power. Hence it is that the host of heaven is divided into nine choirs, which incessantly praise and worship God. The existence of these nine choirs we know from the testimony of Scripture. Our faith in it has not to be built upon any fanciful interpretation of some pious contemplative, nor upon the opinion of even some learned Father of the Church, whose vast erudition

might claim for his views our most profound respect. No ; in the pages of the Inspired Volume itself, there is frequent mention of these nine choirs.

It speaks of Angels, who announce to men the lesser events, and act as guardians to private individuals ; of Archangels, who carry tidings of the greater events, and have under their custody Pontiffs, kings, princes, and pastors ; of Virtues, who, endowed with power from God, move the universal causes of things, and work miracles ; of Powers, who, sharing in the might of the Creator, hold in check the Spirits of darkness, and hinder them from doing us mischief ; of Principalities, who rule the inferior order of Angels, protect and guard provinces and kingdoms ; of Dominations, in whom there shines forth God's supreme dominion over all things ; of Thrones, upon whose mighty shoulders God sits as Judge, and by whom His judgments are communicated to His creatures ; of Cherubim, so called, because of their supereminent knowledge ; and of Seraphim, because of the burning love which they pour forth upon all the other angelic beings.

Of Angels and of Archangels, we find mention made in countless passages of Holy Writ ; the prophetical Books speak of the Cherubim and the Seraphim ; in the Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul speaks of four other choirs, when he records of God the Father that " He raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His right hand in the heavenly places above all Principalities, and Powers, and Virtues, and Dominations".¹ The same Apostle writing to the Colossians mentions, in addition to the four preceding choirs, that of the Thrones, which gives us the full number, nine.²

Let us, then, consider the various offices which these holy Spirits fulfil in our regard, that we may stir up in our hearts those sentiments which we ought to have towards them, in return for all that they do for us.

From the teaching of the Inspired Books, it is evident that God employs His Angels in various offices for our spiritual benefit. Speaking to Moses, very probably by the instrumen-

¹ Ephes. i. 21.
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² St. Greg. Mag., Hom., 34, *In Evang.*
26

tality of one of these blessed Spirits, He says : " I will send My Angel before thee, that I may cast out the Chanaanite and the Amorrhite ".¹ After being of infinite service to the young Tobias, the Angel Raphael said to him : " It is time, therefore, that I return to Him Who sent me ".² The gladdest tidings ever conveyed from God to our sinful race, were brought by the Angel Gabriel, who announced to the Blessed Virgin the advent of the Redeemer : " And in the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God . . . to a virgin . . . and the virgin's name was Mary ".³ God employs them not only to carry His orders to men, but to enlighten them as to what they ought to do ; for, to enlighten is nothing else than to reveal some truth which will guide them in difficult paths. Of this, also, there are many instances, as when the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet Daniel, on the conclusion of his earnest prayer, and said, " Understand, O son of man ! " . . . and instructed him in these words : " O Daniel ! I am come forth to teach thee, and that thou mightest understand ".⁴ Also, when the life of the Infant Jesus was threatened by His enemies, an Angel appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying : " Arise and flee into Egypt . . . for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him ".⁵

But that which most closely concerns each of us is the teaching of the Church, that these powerful and loving citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem are deputed by God to guard and defend us, in the unequal contest which we have to wage against the malignity of the devil and of his impious hosts.

Though this consoling doctrine is not an article of our faith, inasmuch as nothing has yet been authoritatively defined about it, yet to deny it is regarded as rash and erroneous ; for, the testimony of the Scripture in its favour is so clear and so often expressed, that it would savour of heresy to gainsay it. Thus, in the Psalms, David tells us : " He hath given His Angels charge of thee, to keep thee in all thy ways " ;⁶ and St. Paul calls them, " ministering Spirits, sent to minister for

¹ Exod. xxxiii. 2.

² Tobias xii. 20.

³ St. Luke i. 26.

⁴ Dan. viii. 17.

⁵ St. Matt. ii. 13.

⁶ Ps. ix. 11.

them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation".¹ From among the shining lights of the Church, who have shed upon this subject the brilliancy of their teaching, we will select Origen, whose words may be accepted as voicing the opinion of the Fathers. Commenting upon the eighth chapter of Genesis, he says: "The Angels have the care of our souls, and into their hands these souls of ours are, from our earliest infancy, intrusted as to tutors and caretakers".

Now, while admitting that this is the case with the Christian community as a body, there may be found some persons who will deny that to each of us there is given a particular Angel to be our guide and defender. The opinion of these, though not heretical, inasmuch as nothing has been defined by the Church concerning this point, yet cannot be maintained without incurring the note of rashness and of error; for, setting aside the mind and the feeling of the Church, the words of the Scripture are so luminous, that to gainsay them would be irreverent, nay, rash and full of error. For Our Lord Himself, when warning us against the heinous sin of putting the stumbling-block of scandal in the way of children, and the dreadful punishment due to so grave a crime, says: "For their Angels in heaven always see the face of My Father Who is in heaven,"² by these words giving us to understand that each of these little ones, and therefore each of us also, has over him one of those mighty Angels to protect, defend, and pray for him. So deeply imbued with this conviction were the minds of the first followers of the Apostles, that when St. Peter, on being released from prison by the ministry of an Angel, came to the door of the house in which dwelt Mary the mother of John, the persons there assembled, hardly believing in the possibility of his deliverance, cried out: "It is his Angel".³

The faith of these early ages in the guardianship of each of us by these blessed Spirits, was transmitted through the centuries. It is witnessed unto by the writers and apologists of the Church. Eusebius of Cæsarea thus writes: "We have learned from the Scriptures, that to each of us God has given an

¹ Heb. i. 14

² St. Matt. xviii. 10.

³ Acts xii. 15.

Angel to be his guardian".¹ Commenting upon the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, St. Jerome exclaims: "Great is the dignity of souls which, from the first moment of their existence, have an Angel deputed to guard them". The same doctrine is affirmed by St. Anselm: "As soon," he says, "as the soul is infused into the body, it is committed to the keeping of an Angel".²

It is also maintained not only that each man is thus protected from harm by these soldiers of God, but that each empire, each kingdom, each people has a special Angel to watch over, protect, and safeguard its eternal interests. For this teaching there is ample warrant in the Sacred Scripture; for, in the tenth chapter of the Prophet Daniel, mention is made of the Angel who guarded the Persians, and of another Angel who watched over the welfare of the Greeks. This latter Angel addressing the Prophet, said: "The prince of the kingdom of the Persians resisted me one and twenty days, and behold Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there by the King of the Persians". It was, no doubt, in consequence of these words that St. Basil said: "Some of these Angels are placed over nations, and some guard each of the faithful".³

If each of us has a guardian Angel, it will be well now to examine what are the offices which that blessed Spirit performs in our behalf.

The very title "Guardian Angels," given to them, will at once point out to us the first of these. As our guardians, they either deliver us from, or protect us against, the dangers and the evils which either threaten or befall us during the course of our earthly pilgrimage. This was the idea uppermost in the mind of the aged Patriarch Jacob, when his son Joseph brought to his bedside the two children that had been born to him in Egypt. Laying his hands upon their heads, he prayed and said: "The Angel that delivered me from all evils, bless these boys".⁴ As the enemies with whom we have

¹ *De præpar. Angelica.*

² *In Elucidaria.*

³ St. Basil, *De Angelis.*

⁴ Gen. xlvi. 16.

to contend in the way of our salvation are the chief—or at least, one of the chief—hindrances to our eternal felicity, it is natural that these Angels should, in a special way, direct their guardianship of us to warding off from us the evils which the malignity of these enemies would bring upon us. After his marriage with the daughter of Raguel, Tobias was saved by his Angel from the shaft of death launched by the devil against her former husbands ; “for Raphael took the devil, and bound him in the desert of upper Egypt,”¹ so that he might not harm him. As an effectual means for thwarting the malignity of our enemies, the Angels also suggest to our minds pious thoughts, and strong resolves to cultivate virtue, and carefully to avoid all evil. For this very reason, God impressed upon Moses the necessity for paying particular attention to the Angel whom He had given to him to be his guide and protector : “Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned ; for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and My name is in him”.²

It is their office, also, to present our petitions to God, and to join their acceptable prayers with our unworthy ones, that so they may become more pleasing to God, and may more easily procure for us that for which they are presented before the throne of mercy. St. John witnessed this part of their service to men, when, in a vision, he beheld the Angel offering upon the golden altar the prayers of the Saints : “And another Angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer ; and there was given to him much incense that he should offer the prayers of all Saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God”.³

All these goodly offices these celestial Spirits continuously perform for us throughout the whole course of our lives. They cover us with their sheltering wings when we are stretched upon our bed of death ; they receive our spirit when it is released from the trammels of the flesh ; they carry it before the judgment seat ; they plead for it ; if there should be found it it aught of imperfection, they conduct it to the

¹ Tobias viii. 3.

² Exod. xxiii. 21.

³ Apocal. viii. 3.

cleansing fires of Purgatory ; during its term of suffering and of banishment, they console it ; and when every stain has been purged away, it is their privilege to carry it to the kingdom of God, for in St. Luke's Gospel we read that when Lazarus died, " Angels carried him into Abraham's bosom ".¹

Now that you know all that these blessed Spirits do for you, you will very naturally ask, what you are to do for them, or, in other words, what are your duties towards your Angel.

The first of these is, as God pointed out to His servant Moses, " to take notice of him ". This is, to have a lively faith in his presence ; to be fully convinced that he is as present with you as is the all-encasing air ; that all your actions are performed in his sight ; that nothing escapes his keen, piercing glance ; consequently, that if you do ill, he will bear witness of it before the dread tribunal of God.

Besides " taking notice of him " you must attend to his inspirations ; or, as God expresses it, " You must hear his voice ". For God, having appointed the Angel to be your guardian, that heavenly Spirit is with you, not only to ward off evil, but to be your trusty adviser. How often during your life have you not had sudden inspirations to do good, to weep over your sins, to resolve to amend your life ? These are the whisperings, the suggestions of your Angel. It is to the observance of, and the compliance with, these movements of grace that God urges you when He tells you " to hear the voice of the Angel ". Moreover, it is an exhortation not to turn a deaf ear to these inspirations. To avoid being guilty of so foolish an act, is the next duty that you are called upon to perform for your Angel : " Do not think him to be contemned ". Not to give heed unto those who counsel you is practically to treat them with contempt. It is equivalent to saying to them : " Your words are not worth listening to ; your advice is not worth following ".

Of this contempt you are guilty as often as you refuse to follow the suggestions of your Angel, and disdain to accept his advice ; when you hesitate about sin, and balance the

¹ Chap. xvi. 22.

swift mind between God and Satan ; when, at your Angel's suggestion, you do not turn for help to the mighty God Who bids you call upon Him, that He may deliver you. Conduct such as this provokes the anger of the holy Spirits, for God says : " When thou hast sinned, he will not forgive ".

Therefore, in return for all that your Angel does, and that he has done for you, add to the duties already mentioned prompt obedience to his wishes, suggestions, and prohibitions ; the profoundest respect for his glorious presence ; and an ever-mindful consciousness of that presence. This consciousness will hinder you from ever being guilty of any act that you would be ashamed to perform in the presence of any one whom you respect and love. Of the love which you owe to him we need only say, that if you will give your heart fair play, and bring before its notice all the gracious acts performed for you by your Angel, it will overflow with affection for one who lavishes upon you more disinterested love than does even your own mother. The memory, too, of these many kindnesses, of these invaluable services, will cause to gush forth from your heart a limpid stream of gratitude. In what will the sum of all these duties find its expression ? In heartfelt and continual prayer to your Angel. This is the most important of your duties to him, for it will practically secure the performance of all the rest. Pray, then, to your Angel, and you will be mindful of his presence ; pray to him, and you will hear his voice ; pray to him, and you will never treat him with contempt ; pray to him, and you will obey, respect, love him ; pray to him, and you will be profoundly grateful to him for his unwearying watchfulness over you.

THE EVIL SPIRITS.

THE Angels, as we have already seen, were subjected to a trial of their fidelity, before being admitted to confirmation in grace and to eternal beatitude. Those among them who stood firm, were thus rewarded by God ; those who wavered and fell, were deprived of sanctifying grace, were thrust out

of heaven, and cast headlong into the bottomless abyss of hell. In the Sacred Scripture, these latter are called devils. Their chief is named : (1) the devil, that is to say, the calumniator, because when tempting Eve, and very probably also when seducing from their allegiance his fellow Angels, he spoke evil of God ; (2) Satan, a name signifying the enemy, the adversary ; (3) Lucifer, because he was the brightest, the most highly favoured of the heavenly host ; and (4) the dragon, the old serpent, because in the Book of Genesis, which narrates the temptation of our first parents, he is so styled.

Having in the two preceding Lectures treated of the good Angels, we must now speak to you of the wicked angels or devils, in order that by pointing out their hostility to mankind, we may, as far as you are concerned, render that hostility not only harmless but even beneficial.

Before speaking on these two points, it will be necessary to make one or two preliminary observations, in order to meet certain objections which naturally present themselves to the mind.

The first of these is, that God created the devils. This is perfectly true ; but He did not create them in that state in which this term can be applied to them. By His act of creation, they were Angels, endowed with sanctifying grace and destined like those now circling His throne, to the joys and the glory of heaven. An act of their own free will, their sin, their revolt, made them devils, by depriving them of the grace and the friendship of their Creator. This is the teaching of the great Lateran Council which says : "God created the devils, good by nature ; they themselves became evil, by abusing the liberty given to them".

Granting this, it may still be asked : "Why could not these sinners be pardoned, just as we men are pardoned when we sin?" The answer to this question must be sought in the difference existing between man's nature and the nature of the Angels. Man is a complex being consisting of matter and of spirit ; and on that account, he is never able in any of his acts completely to unfold his being. Hence it is that when a man sins or becomes evil, there is always left in him something of good

on which to build up a completely restored being. In the case of the angelic nature, however, such a restoration is impossible ; for that nature being purely spiritual, completely unfolds itself in each of its acts. Therefore, by revolting against God, the Angels altogether ceased to be what God made them ; they became wholly evil ; consequently, in their nature, there was nothing left as a point of departure for their restoration to that which they were before their fall. Therefore, during their period of trial, they could make but one choice ; and that choice once made, those among them who adhered to God remained for ever fixed in it—they could not be perverted ; while those who abandoned God, by that act for ever turned away from Him—they could not be converted.¹ For God cannot pardon those who cling to evil, and who do not repent. To pardon such as these would not be an act of clemency, but of weak acquiescence in evil. But as we have seen, it is impossible for the angelic nature having once given itself over to evil, ever to withdraw itself from the object of its choice. Therefore, it is impossible for the fallen Angels to be redeemed or to be pardoned by God.

These two difficulties being cleared away, we may now consider the hostility of these evil spirits to us. By some writers, the origin of their enmity is traced to their jealousy of us, who, as not a few of the Fathers think, were created to fill up the void occasioned by the revolt of the Angels : “ By the envy of the devil, death—the penalty of sin—came into the world ”.² But even setting aside this, we may find another reason in the fact that our nature is stamped with the likeness of the Divinity. God has deigned to create us to His own image and likeness. Now the devils necessarily hate God, by Whose almighty hand they are punished. But as they are utterly powerless to wreak their vengeance upon Him, they pour out their malignant hate against their Creator, upon us His frail images. These they would gladly destroy, but they cannot ; and as those who are unable to visit their enemies with the punishment which they desire to inflict, expend

¹ S. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, q. 64, art. 2.

² *Wisd. ii. 24.*

their rage upon anything that belongs to them, and particularly upon anything that resembles them, so do the devils avenge themselves upon us, because of our likeness unto God.

The first act of hostility committed by them against God, after their expulsion from heaven, was the seduction of the creatures whom God had made to His own image and likeness. After doing unto them this grievous wrong, they set themselves up to be the gods whom men should worship instead of their Creator. This they were able, in great measure to effect, by subjecting men to the animal instincts of their nature, and by engaging them in the pursuit of merely temporal things. Hence, Paganism is, in reality, the system established by devils, to rob God of the worship and the service of His creatures. For this conclusion, we have the authority of St. Paul, who says: "The things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God".

The malice which they bear to the human race, and the hostility with which they are animated towards it, are made manifest to us by their actions towards individual men, actions the record of which is to be found in the pages of Holy Writ. This record will serve to give us some idea of their implacable hate; we will, therefore, put before you a few examples which the Sacred Text narrates for our instruction.

In the person of holy Job, God set before the eyes of all His servants the model of a blameless, devout and religious man, upon whom He could look down from the height of heaven, and, as it were, take pride in his sanctity and in the devotedness with which he served Him. Satan, as was natural, raged furiously against one who so perfectly reflected the image of his Creator. But being unable to shake the fixed resolve of his will, he attacked him, by the permission of God, in his flesh, and in his worldly substance. He destroyed his property; he slew his children; he struck him with a dreadful disease, and reduced him to so great poverty that Job sat upon a dunghill, abandoned by his friends, an object of loathing even unto himself.

From these facts, we may form some idea of the malignant nature of these evil spirits. That malignity is so great

that nothing can satisfy it, can glut its desire of doing evil, or of working mischief to those against whom it is directed. Our Lord's words to St. Peter show us that even against the pillars of His Church, they should in a special manner direct their attack: "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not".¹ The evil spirit did not confine his attack to the rock on which Christ built His Church; he directed it against even the Divine founder and builder Himself! "The devil," says St. John, "put it into the heart of Judas, the son of Simon, the Iscariot, to betray Him."² That same wicked spirit inspired Ananias and his wife Saphira with the idea of telling a lie to the Holy Ghost. To this fact St. Peter bears witness, for he said to the unhappy man: "Why hath Satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost?"³

His hatred of mankind is manifest, whenever, as in the case of Job, God for His own wise ends permits him to attack particular individuals, or to use them as his slaves. From his treatment of these wretched creatures we may learn with what fury he will rage against his dupes, when at last they are for ever subjected to his sway. One of these chanced, upon a certain occasion, to be present when Our Lord preached in the Synagogue. The unclean spirit who had possession of him caused him to cry out: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know Who thou art, the Holy One of God." When Jesus, with words of almighty power addressing him said: "Speak no more, and go out of him!" the unclean spirit obeyed, indeed, but first rent his flesh as with the claws of a wild beast.⁴ Of another man, similarly under the power of the devil, it is written, "he used to dash him against the earth, to cast him into the fire and into the water to destroy him," and when Christ by His word compelled him to flee and release his victim, "he first rent and tore him".⁵

¹ St. Luke xxii. 31. ² St. John xiii. 2, 27. ³ Acts v. 3.

⁴ St. Mark i. 23, 29.

⁵ St. Mark ix. 19, 25.

These instances of the devil's malignity are but so many glimpses given to us by God of the implacable hate of the evil spirits to the race of men. These proofs of their hostility to us are amply sufficient to fill with terror the heart of any one who gives to the subject a serious thought. But while shuddering at the dreadful peril to which that hostility exposes us, we may very naturally ask : "Why does not God prevent His and our enemies from tempting us poor weak mortals, and take from them the power to wreck His work and to frustrate His designs ?" This, as we have said, is a natural question to ask, and the answer to it is not far to seek. God permits the devils to tempt us, and by that permission exposes His work to ruin, in order that His creatures, by resisting temptations, may acquire immense stores of merit, and may confound the pride of His and of our enemies. Had He left to the devils power enough to subject us completely to themselves, that concession would undoubtedly have been contrary to His wisdom and His goodness. He did not do so. He despoiled the devils of that power, and left them nothing more than the power to tempt, at the same time giving to us the power to withstand temptation and to conquer. It is, therefore, His will that by resisting the seductive power possessed by the devils, we should win for ourselves great merit. Though very many through cowardice refuse to do so, yet their refusal is no reason why the virtuous, the brave, the men of good will should be deprived of this glory.

If for so ordering matters, we object to the providence of God, we must also object to the fact of His having left to us our bodily senses, for these also are so many sources of temptation and seduction. He would have to deprive us of sight, for by it we gaze upon that which excites our cupidity and our lust for pleasure ; He would have to take away our sense of touch and of taste, for these make us pursue the things that minister pleasure to our flesh ; He would have to close our ears, for these hearken unto impure discourse ; He would have to paralyse our limbs, which eagerly run to the ways of iniquity. He has not done so, for the same reason

for which he did not take away from the evil spirits their power to allure us into the ways of sin. Moreover, He has willed that by resisting the devil we should fill that proud spirit with confusion, by changing his filthy temptations into so many means of acquiring virtue, and of winning for ourselves greater glory in heaven.

Knowing, then, the malignity of the devil, and being fully persuaded of his undying hatred and of his unwearying efforts to pervert and involve us in the ruin which has fallen upon himself and his confederates, it is our duty, and it is to our advantage, to resist him, to reject his solicitations, and to adhere to God. But how shall we do this? St. Peter tells us in what way we are to fight against our wily foes, and with what weapons we shall most certainly win for ourselves the victory. "Brethren," he says, "be sober and watch, because your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist ye, strong in faith."¹

In these words he furnishes us with three weapons by which the devil is most easily put to flight. First, we must be sober, that is to say, we must in all things study moderation; moderation not only in eating and in drinking, but in our use of created things in general, mortifying the desires and the passions of the flesh and of the spirit, for this is the primary effect of Christian sobriety and temperance.

In the next place we must be watchful—"Be sober, and watch"—that is to say, we must take notice of that which passes within us; of the thoughts which are in our minds; of the desires which are engendered in our hearts; of the various objects which are presented to our senses. Watchfulness over these is counselled in order to prevent any germ of evil from taking root within us, and from springing up into life and activity.

Lastly, by strong faith, he bids us resist the devil: "Whom resist ye, strong in faith". The first fruit of this strong faith is prayer; for the light of faith makes us see our exceeding

¹ St. Peter v. 8.

great weakness, and makes us know that we can resist the devil only by the power of God, a power obtained by means of prayer.

Therefore, let him who would set the devil at naught take unto himself this spiritual armour. Let him grasp in his hand these spiritual weapons ; and, strong as the devil undoubtedly is, persistent as he is in his attacks, malignant as he is in his hatred, he will never be able to overthrow any Christian soldier thus armed. He will flee away confounded, humbled ; and every attempt on his part to shake the allegiance of a foe whom in his obdurate pride he regards as contemptible, will redound only to his confusion and ultimate defeat.

END OF VOL. II.



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